THE NABOB



The NABOB

By

Alphonse Daudet

TRANSLATED BY

HENRY BLANCHAMP

GREENING and Co Lim^t LONDON
20 Cecil Court Charing † Road
19 02

WGM

PREFACE

NEARLY ten years have gone by since "The Nabob" went into its one-hundredth edition in France, and the popularity of the famous story has not waned. Undoubtedly, it is Alphonse Daudet's most powerful novel. Never did he see more clearly into life and human character, not in "Sapho" itself.

"The Nabob" has, besides, a special interest of its own. All the chief characters were drawn from actual personages. "The Nabob" was a François Bravay, who was a favourite of the Khedive of Egypt, made a fortune in that country, and created a sensation in the luxurious Paris of 1864. *The original of Hemerlingue was alive two years ago, and is, perhaps, to-day. The Duke de Mora was in real life the Duke de Morny, the celebrated President of the Legislative Body under Napoleon III. He died in* 1865. *Daudet was once one of his secretaries. "I have painted him," says Daudet himself, "with the impertinent, serene smile he always wore when I saw him, and with which he liked to make his public appearance, in his double rôle of Richelieu and Brummel." Felicia Ruys has been identified with Madame Sarah Bernhardt, with I know not what amount of reason; the original of Moessard died only about two or three years ago;*

Monpavon and De Bois-Landry were taken from two well-known Parisians, one of whom is, perhaps, alive now, as are also the originals of Paganetti and Le Merquier. Cardailhac was not, as was supposed, Carvalho, the director of the Opéra Comique, but the witty Nestor Roqueplan. Joyeuse was probably suggested by one of the Communards, whilst the portrait of Dr Jenkins has been the subject of violent newspaper controversy. There can be no doubt he was painted from life And, at any rate, we have Zola's statement that the Bethlehem Refuge was an actually existing concern. So "The Nabob" has the added interest of being founded on some of the doings of real persons during one of the most shamelessly sybaritic and brilliantly cynical periods of French history.

In conclusion of this brief preface--the preface to so fascinating a book cannot, perhaps, be too brief—let me say that omissions have necessarily been made, but none that will interfere with the pleasure of the story.

H. B.

CONTENTS

CHAP		PAGE
I.	THE PATIENTS OF DR JENKINS	7
II	A LUNCH IN THE PLACE VENDOME	31
III.	A DÉBUT IN SOCIETY	51
IV.	THE JOYEUSE FAMILY	69
V.	FELICIA RUYS	85
VI.	JANSOULET AT HOME	106
VII.	THE BETHLEHEM REFUGE	114
VIII	BONNE MAMAN	127
IX.	IN HONOUR OF THE BEY	142
X.	A CORSICAN ELECTION	161
XI.	A DAY OF SPLEEN	168
XII	THE EXHIBITION	180
XIII.	A PUBLIC MAN	194
XIV.	THE APPARITION	209
XV	JENKINS'S PEARLS	221
XVI.	THE FUNERAL	235
XVII.	THE BARONESS HEMERLINGUE	248
XVIII	THE SITTING OF THE CHAMBER	264
XIX.	PARISIAN DRAMAS	288
XX.	AT BORDIGHERA	304
XXI.	THE FIRST NIGHT OF "RÉVOLTE"	318

THE NABOB

—o—

CHAPTER I

The Patients of Dr Jenkins

Standing on the steps of his modest *hôtel* in the Rue de Lisbonne, newly shaved, his eyes sparkling, his lips half-open with a feeling of self-satisfaction, his long, iron-grey hair spread out on his large coat-collar, broad-shouldered, robust, and healthy as an oak-tree, the famous Irish doctor, Robert Jenkins, Knight of the Medjidieh and of the renowned order of Charles III. of Spain, member of several scientific and benevolent societies, the founder and president of the Bethlehem Refuge; in a word, Jenkins, the inventor of Jenkins's Pearls (which were based on arsenic), that is to say, the fashionable doctor of the year 1864, the busiest man in Paris, was about to get into his carriage one morning towards the end of November, when a window opened on the first story in the inner court of the house, and a woman's voice timidly queried:

"Will you be back for lunch, Robert?"

Oh, what a kindly and loyal smile suddenly beamed over the face of the *savant* and apostle of charity! and how easy it was to divine in the tender greeting despatched upwards by his eyes towards the warm, white *peignoir*, that could be half-seen behind the uplifted tapestry, one of those quiet and secure conjugal passions, which habit binds close with all the suppleness and solidity of its bonds.

"No, Madame Jenkins." He liked to bestow on her publicly the title of legitimate spouse, as if he found a secret satisfaction in it, a kind of discharge of conscience towards the woman who was making life so joyous for him. "No, don't expect me this morning. I am lunching in Place Vendôme."

"Oh, yes! the Nabob's," said pretty Madame Jenkins, with a marked shade of respect for that Arabian Nights individual, of whom the whole of Paris had been talking for a month; then, after a slight hesitation, she whispered very tenderly and in quite a low voice, from between the heavy tapestry, so that the doctor alone could hear:

"Whatever you do, don't forget what you promised me."

Probably the promise was a difficult one to keep, for, on being reminded of it, the apostle of charity frowned, his smile became petrified, and his face took on an expression of indescribable hardness; but it only lasted an instant. The faces of fashionable physicians acquire expertness in lying at the bedside of their rich patients. With his tenderest, most cordial air, he answered, displaying a row of glistening teeth:

"I shall do what I promised, Madame Jenkins. Now, go in at once and shut the window. The mist is cold this morning."

Yes, the mist was cold, but white as a vapour of snow; and, as it hung outside the windows of the large brougham, it threw a softened light on the newspaper which the doctor held in his hands. In the densely-populated, narrow, and dark parts of Paris, in the trading and working districts, you never see the pretty morning mist that lingers in the broad avenues; at an early hour the activity of the newly-awakened day, the passing of market waggons, of omnibuses, of heavy drays that shake their iron fittings, quickly chop it up, fray it, and disperse it. Every passer-by carries away a bit of mist in his shabby over-coat, in his comforter which shows the woof, and his common gloves which he rubs one against the other. It drenches the shivering blouses, the waterproofs that are thrown over working-skirts; it blends with all the breaths, which are hot through insomnia or alcohol, penetrates to the bottom of empty stomachs, spreads into the shops as they are opened, the black court-yards, along staircases whose balusters and walls it wets, and goes up to the fireless attics. That is why there is so little of it left in the street.

But in the spacious and fashionable part of Paris where Jenkins's *clientèle* lived, in the wide boulevards planted with trees, on the deserted quays, the mist was hovering in spotless white, in innumerable folds, light and fleecy as cotton-wool. There was something private, discreet, almost luxurious about it, because the sun, in its lazy rising, was beginning to spread softly empurpled tints, which made the mist, that enveloped the rows of mansions up to their roofs, look like white muslin thrown over scarlet cloth. It looked like a great curtain sheltering the late, light sleep of wealth, a thick curtain behind which you

could hear nothing but the cautious closing of a court-yard gate, the tin measures of the milkmen, the bells of a herd of she-asses trotting quickly along, followed by the short, panting breathing of their driver, and the dull rumbling of Jenkins's brougham beginning its daily round.

First, to the Hôtel de Mora. It was a splendid palace, on the Quai d'Orsay, next to the Spanish Embassy, whose long terraces were a continuation of the palace terraces. Its chief entrance was in the Rue de Lille, and it had a gate by the water-side. The brougham sped, like an arrow, between two high walls covered with ivy, and connected by imposing, vaulted arches Its approach was announced by two strokes of a loud bell, which aroused Jenkins from the ecstatic state into which the reading of the newspaper seemed to have plunged him. Presently, the sound of the wheels was deadened on the sand of a vast court-yard, and the brougham, after wheeling elegantly, stopped opposite the steps of the mansion, which was crowned by a broad, circular, projecting roof. Some ten carriages, all in a line, could be distinguished in the thick fog; and the outlines of English grooms, walking the Duke's saddle-horses, could be seen along an avenue of acacias, which were quite dried up at that season of the year, and bare in the bark. There was a general atmosphere of well-ordered, quiet, magnificent, and assured luxury.

"Even if I come early, there are always others before me," said Jenkins to himself, noticing the row of carriages in front of his brougham; but, certain as he was that he would not have to wait, he held his head high and assumed an air of quiet authority as he went up that official flight of steps, which were

every day ascended by so many quivering ambitions, so many faltering anxieties.

Beginning with the antechamber, which was high and resonant as a church, and which two large wood-fires, as well as stoves burning night and day, filled with radiant life, the luxury of the inner house was wafted in warm and intoxicating gusts. It resembled both a conservatory and a stove. There was much warmth in the brightness; white wainscotings, white marbles, immense windows, nothing stifling or closed in, and, yet, an equable atmosphere made to environ a rare, refined, and nervous existence. Jenkins blossomed forth in this factitious sun of wealth, he greeted with a "Good morning, sirs," the powdered porter, with his broad, gold shoulder-belt, the footmen in their shorts and gold and blue livery, all standing to the salute, he touched with his finger the big cage of marmosets which resounded with shrill cries and capers, and whistled as he ran up the light marble staircase, padded with a carpet as thick as a lawn, which led to the Duke's apartments. Although he had now been visiting at the Hôtel de Mora for six months, the worthy doctor still experienced the physical impression of gaiety, of lightness, which was in the atmosphere of the house.

This was the abode of the greatest functionary of the Empire, and yet there was nothing to suggest the idea of government or cases of dusty documents. The Duke had only agreed to assume the high offices of Minister of State and President of the Council, on condition that he should not be obliged to leave his own house. He went to the Ministry for only one or two hours a day, just enough to sign the indispensable papers, and he gave audience in his own

bed-chamber. In spite of the early hour, the salon was full. You might see grave, anxious faces, red-lipped provincial prefects, with the customary official whiskers, rather less arrogant in this antechamber than in their prefectures, magistrates with austere aspect and calm gestures, deputies, brimful of importance, magnates of finance, wealthy country manufacturers, among whom you might notice here and there the slender, ambitious figure of a delegate, of a councillor of the prefecture, in petitioner's garb of black coat and white cravat; and all of them, whether standing, seated, in groups or solitary, had their eyes silently riveted on the high door, which was closed on their fate, and through which they would soon issue triumphant or low-spirited.

Jenkins rapidly traversed the crowd, and every one followed with an anxious eye the newcomer, whom the usher, adorned with a chain, correct and frigid, sitting at a table by the side of the door, welcomed with a slight smile that was both respectful and familiar.

"Whom is he with?" asked the doctor, pointing to the Duke's room.

In a whisper, and with a slightly ironical wink, the usher murmured a name that would have aroused indignation among the high personages (had they heard it), who had already been waiting an hour until the opera costumier had ended his audience.

A sound of voices, a ray of light. . . . Jenkins had just gone into the Duke; he never waited, never.

Standing with his back to the chimney-piece, dressed in a light-blue fur jacket, whose soft tone refined his energetic and haughty head, the President of the Council was having designed under his own eyes a

pierrette costume which the Duchess was to wear at her next ball, and he gave his directions with all gravity as if he were dictating the draft of a law.

"Frill the ruff very delicately, and don't frill the cuffs. . . . Good-day, Jenkins. . . . One moment."

Jenkins bowed, and walked a few paces in the huge room, whose windows, opening on a garden that stretched as far as the Seine, framed one of the finest views of Paris, the bridges, the Tuileries, the Louvre, in an interlacing of black trees which seemed traced in Chinese ink on the floating background of fog. A broad, very low bed, raised on an estrade a few steps high, two or three small, lacquered screens, vaguely and capriciously gilded, as well as the double doors and thick, woollen carpets, indicated an excessive fear of cold. Various kinds of seats, couches, lounging-chairs, scattered all over the place, all low, round, and of an indolent or voluptuous shape, comprised the furniture of this celebrated room, where the gravest as well as the most trivial questions were treated in the same serious tone.

On the wall was a fine portrait of the Duchess; on the chimney-piece stood a bust of the Duke, the work of Felicia Ruys, which had won the honour of the first medal at the recent Salon.

"Well, Jenkins, how do this morning?" said his Excellency, coming up to him, whilst the costumier gathered together his fashion drawings, which were scattered over all the arm-chairs.

"And you, my dear Duke? I thought you looked rather fatigued at the Variétés last night."

"Humbug! I never felt better. . . . Your Pearls are doing me a deuced lot of good. . . . I feel a

life, a vigour in me when I think how utterly knocked-up I was six months ago!"

Jenkins, without a word, had placed his big head against the fur jacket of the minister at the spot where the heart beats in the generality of human beings. He listened a moment whilst his Excellency continued speaking in the lazy, wearied tone, which was one of his distinguishing characteristics.

"Who was that man you were with last night, doctor? that tall, bronzed Tartar who was laughing so loud in front of your stage-box?"

"That was the Nabob, Duke that famous Jansoulet, who is making such a sensation just now."

"I might have guessed it. Everyone was looking at him. The actresses were playing to him only. . . . You know him? What kind of fellow is he?"

"I know him . . . that is to say, I am his doctor. . . . Thanks, my dear Duke, I have finished. You are quite well. . . . When he arrived in Paris a month ago, the change of climate was rather trying. He sent for me, and since then has been very friendly to me. . . . All I know about him is that he possesses a colossal fortune, which he made in Tunis when in the service of the Bey, and he has a loyal heart, a generous soul, in which ideas of humanity——"

"In Tunis?" interrupted the Duke, who had very little sentimentality or humanitarianism in his nature. "Why, then, the name of Nabob?"

"Bah! the Parisians are not particular. . . . They imagine any rich stranger is a Nabob, no matter whence he comes. . . . This one, at any rate, looks his name, with his copper-coloured face, his eyes like burning embers, and, moreover, a gigantic fortune, which, I don't hesitate to say, he employs in the

noblest and wisest way. It is to him that I am obliged" —here the doctor assumed a modest air—"that I am obliged for having been able at last to establish the Bethlehem Refuge for the nursing of children, which a morning paper, *The Messager*, I believe, which I was just now glancing through, calls 'the great philanthropic idea of the century.'"

The Duke looked absently at the paper which Jenkins offered him. He was not the man to be taken in by puffing phrases.

"That Monsieur Jansoulet must be very rich," he said coldly. "He finances Cardailhac's theatre, Monpavon has his debts paid by him, Bois-Landry is starting a stud for him, old Schwalbach is furnishing him with a picture gallery. . . That all means money."

Jenkins began to laugh.

"My dear Duke, the poor Nabob is greatly preoccupied with you As soon as he arrived here, firmly intending to become a Parisian, a man of the world, he took you for his pattern in everything, and I will not conceal from you the fact that he is very anxious to study his model at closer quarters."

"I know, I know. . . . Monpavon has already asked me for permission to bring him. . . . But I must wait, I must see. . . . You have to be careful about those large fortunes that are made so far off. . . . My goodness, I don't say. . . . If I were to meet him anywhere but in my own house, say, at the theatre, in a drawing-room——"

"It so happens that Madame Jenkins is going to give a small party next month. If you would do us the honour——"

"I shall come with pleasure, my dear doctor; and

should the Nabob be there, I should not object to his being introduced to me."

At this moment the usher on duty half opened the door.

"The Minister of the Interior is in the blue drawing-room. . . . He has only one word to say to your Excellency. . . . The Prefect of Police is still waiting below, in the gallery."

"All right," said the Duke, "I am coming. . . . But I should first like to settle about the costume. . . . Look here, Mr What's your name, what shall we decide about those frills? Au revoir, doctor. . . . I am simply to go on with the Pearls, I suppose?"

"Yes, go on with the Pearls," said Jenkins, bowing; and he went out, his face beaming at the two strokes of good luck he had had—the honour of receiving the Duke, and the pleasure of obliging his dear Nabob. In the antechamber the crowd of petitioners he went through was even greater than when he had arrived; newcomers had been added to the earlier arrivals, others were mounting the staircase in a hurry and very pale, and carriages continued entering the court-yard and arranging themselves in a circle in two rows, gravely, solemnly, whilst the question of the frilled cuffs was being discussed upstairs with no inferior solemnity.

"To the Club," said Jenkins to his coachman.

The doctor alighted at the corner of the Rue Royale. From top to bottom of the great gaming establishment, servants were moving, shaking the carpets, ventilating the saloons in which hovered the fumes of cigars, and heaps of delicate ashes consumed by fire crumbled at the bottom of the fire-place, whilst upon the green tables, which still trembled with the

gambling of the previous night, a few silver candlesticks were yet burning, and the flames went quite straight up in the dull light of full day-time. The noise, the movement, ceased at the third floor, where some members of the club had their rooms. Among them was the Marquis de Monpavon, whom Jenkins was visiting.

"What! is that you, doctor? . . . The deuce! . . . What time is it? . . . Can't be seen yet."

"Not even by your doctor?"

"Nobody. . . . Matter of form, my dear fellow. . . . Never mind, come in. . . . Warm your feet one moment whilst Francis finishes with my hair."

Jenkins went into the bedroom, which was commonplace like all furnished rooms, and approached the fire, where curling-irons of all sizes were being heated, whilst in the adjoining laboratory, divided off from the bedroom by an Algerian tapestry, the Marquis de Monpavon was being manipulated by his valet. Odours of patchouli, cold cream, burnt horn and hair escaped from the confined space; and from time to time, when Francis came to get a curling-iron, Jenkins caught sight of a toilet-table laden with a number of small instruments of ivory, mother of-pearl, and steel, files, scissors, powder-puffs, and brushes, bottles, cups, and cosmetics, labelled, and set in a row; and in the midst of this exhibition, an old man's long, dry hand, clumsy and tremulous, with nails as carefully tended as those of a Japanese painter, which hesitated among those small gimcracks and doll's-house porcelain.

As he made up his face, the longest, the most complicated of his morning occupations, Monpavon talked with the doctor, and gave him an account of his ailments, the good effect of the Pearls, which

brought back his youth, he said. And, from far off, if you did not see him, you might have imagined you heard Mora's voice, so perfectly had he assimilated his ways of speaking. You might have heard the same unfinished phrases, ending in "ps. . . . ps ps," lisped out, with the words "thingumbob," "what-d'you-call-it," interpolated in his speech, a kind of aristocratic sputtering, weary and lazy, which implied a profound scorn for the vulgar art of speech Everyone in the Duke's entourage tried to imitate that accent, those tones which were disdainful, with an affectation of simplicity.

Jenkins, finding his visit a bit long, had risen to go.

"Good-bye, I'm off. . . . We shall meet at the Nabob's?"

"Yes, I think of lunching there promised to bring him thingumbob, you know you know, for our wonderful scheme ps ps ps otherwise should be glad not to go terrible menagerie, that house."

The Irishman, in spite of his good nature, admitted that his friend's company was rather mixed. But, after all, one must not be cross with him. The poor man knew no better.

"Doesn't know, and won't learn," rejoined Monpavon, acridly. . . . "Instead of consulting experienced people ps ps ps any sponger who turns up. Have you seen the horses Bois-Landry has bought for him? Regular crocks. And he paid twenty thousand francs for them. I bet Bois-Landry got them for six thousand."

"Oh! nonsense — a gentleman!" said Jenkins, with the indignation of a noble nature that refuses to believe in rascality.

Monpavon went on, as if he had not heard the doctor.

"All because the horses came from Mora's stable."

"It's true that he has his mind set on the Duke, has the dear Nabob. Well! I am going to make him very happy by telling him——"

The doctor stopped in embarrassment.

"Telling him what, Jenkins?"

Jenkins, much abashed, had to confess that he had obtained his Excellency's permission to bring his friend Jansoulet to him. He had hardly finished the sentence, when a long spectre, with a flaccid face, and many-coloured hair and whiskers, dashed from the closet into the room, clasping in both hands round his scraggy but very straight neck a peignoir of light silk with violet spots, in which he wrapped himself like a bonbon in its cover. The most prominent features of his face were a long, arched nose, glistening with cold cream, and his quick, piercing eyes, which looked too young and too bright for the heavy, wrinkled eyelids which covered them. All Jenkins's patients had that look.

Monpavon must, indeed, have been greatly stirred to appear thus deprived of all prestige. And his lips were white, his voice changed as he addressed the doctor sharply, without lisping this time and in continuous words.

"Now, look here, my dear sir, no tricks between us, eh? . . . We are both at the same trencher; but I leave you your share, and I intend you shall leave me mine." And Jenkins's amazed look did not stop him. "Let me say this once for all. I promised the Nabob to present him to the Duke, as I once presented you. Don't meddle with what concerns myself only."

Jenkins laid his hand on his heart, protested his innocence. He had never intended. . . . Certainly Monpavon was too great a friend of the Duke, for anybody else. . . . How could he have imagined?——

"I don't imagine anything," said the old gentleman, calmer but still cold. "I only wished to have a perfectly clear explanation with you on the subject."

The Irishman offered him his broad, open hand.

"My dear Marquis, explanations are always clear between men of honour."

"Honour is a big word, Jenkins—let us say, men of good form—that's good enough."

And that "form," which he was invoking as the supreme guide of conduct, suddenly recalling him to the sentiment of his comical situation, the Marquis offered one finger to the demonstrative hand-shake of his friend, and returned with dignity behind his curtain, whilst the doctor left in a hurry to resume his round.

What a magnificent *clientèle* he had, that Jenkins! None but princely mansions, warmed staircases, laden with flowers on every floor, padded, silky alcôves, where illness became discreet and elegant, where there was no suggestion of the brutal hand that throws on a bed of misery those who only stop working in order to die. The doctor's patients were not ill, strictly speaking. They would not have been wanted in a hospital. As their organs had not even the strength of a shock left in them, the seat of their disease could not be found anywhere, and a doctor bending over them would have sought in vain for the throb of any suffering in those bodies in which the inertia, the silence of death had already taken up its abode. They were exhausted, knocked up, anæmic, consumed

by an absurd mode of life, but they found it still so sweet that they were bent upon prolonging it. And Jenkins's Pearls became famous just for that blow of the whip which they gave to jaded lives.

"Doctor, I implore you, I must go to the ball to-night!" a young woman would entreat, who lay done-up on her couch, and whose voice was a mere whisper.

"You will go, my dear child."

And she went, and she never appeared more lovely.

"Doctor, at any cost, even if I had to die for it, I must be present to-morrow at the Council of the Ministers."

He was there, and won a triumph in eloquence and ambitious diplomacy. Afterwards oh, well, afterwards. . . . But no matter! to the last day of their lives, Jenkins's clients went around, showed themselves, deluded the devouring egoism of the crowd. They died as they stood, like men and women of the world.

After numerous visits in the Chaussée d'Antin, and the Champs Élysées, after calling on every millionaire titled person in the Faubourg St. Honoré, the fashionable doctor reached the angle of the Cours La Reine and the Rue François I., before a rounded façade occupying the corner of the quay, and entered a ground-floor room which was not in the least like those he had hitherto visited At the very entrance, the tapestries covering the walls, the old stained-glass lows cutting a discreet and mingled light with ands of lead, a gigantic saint of carved wood which opposite a Japanese monster with protruding eyes, with a back covered by delicately tiled scales, pointed to the imaginative and curious taste of an

artist. The little servant who came and opened the door held in leash an Arab greyhound, taller than himself.

"Madame Constance is at Mass," said he, "and Mademoiselle is in the studio, quite by herself. We have been working since six o'clock in the morning," added the child, with a weary yawn, which infected the dog and caused him to open his large, red, sharp-toothed jaws.

Jenkins, whom we have seen enter so calmly the room of the Minister of State, trembled a little as he raised the tapestry which masqued the open door of the studio. It was a superb sculptor's studio, whose corner façade was rounded off on one side entirely by a glass window, bordered with pilasters, a broad, luminous opening, opalised at the moment by the mist. It was more decorated than such working-rooms usually are, to which plaster stains, boasters, clay, pools of water, lend the appearance of masons' yards, so that a touch of coquetry was added to its artistic purpose. There were green plants in every corner, a few good pictures on the bare wall, and, here and there, on oaken supports, two or three works of Sébastien Ruys, whose last one, exhibited after his death, was covered with black gauze.

The mistress of the house, Felicia Ruys, the daughter of the renowned sculptor, already herself well known by two chefs-d'œuvre, the bust of her father and that of the Duke de Mora, stood in the centre of the studio, in the act of modelling a face. Fitted in a riding-habit of blue cloth with long folds, a fichu of Chinese silk wrapped round her neck like a man's cravat, her splendid black hair carelessly massed on the antique form of her small head, Felicia

was working with extreme ardour, which added to her beauty the condensation, the concentration of all the features resulting from an attentive and pleased expression. But it all changed at once, on the arrival of the doctor.

"Oh, it's you," she said brusquely, as if awakened from a dream. . . . "You rang? I didn't hear you."

And as ennui and fatigue spread suddenly over the lovely face, the only expressive and brilliant features that remained were the eyes, eyes in which the factitious gleam produced by the Jenkins's Pearls was heightened by a natural savagery.

Oh! how humble and lowly became the doctor's voice as he replied:

"You are much absorbed by your work, are you not, my dear Felicia? . . . Is it something new you are creating? . . . It seems to me very pretty."

He approached the still shapeless cast, which showed the vague outlines of a group of two animals, one of which, a greyhound, was racing at full speed with a truly extraordinary expression of vigour.

"The idea came to me last night—I began to work by lamp-light—it's my poor Kadour who does not enjoy it," said the young girl, gazing with a look of caressing kindness at the greyhound, whose paws the little servant was trying to keep apart in order to put them back in the proper pose.

Jenkins observed paternally that she was wrong to tire herself so much, and taking her wrist with ecclesiastic precautions:

"Let me see, I am sure you are feverish."

At the contact of his hand with hers, Felicia made an almost repellent movement.

"Let me be—let me be—your Pearls can't help me. When I don't work, I am weary; I am weary to death, to suicide; my ideas are of the colour of that water flowing down there, blackish and dull. To begin life, and to be disgusted by it, that is hard. I am reduced to envy my poor Constance, who spends her days on her chair, without opening her mouth, but smiling all to herself at her recollections of the past. . . . I have not even pleasing memories to ruminate over—I have only work work!"

As she spoke, she modelled feverishly, sometimes with the boaster, sometimes with her fingers, which she wiped from time to time on a small sponge which was placed on the wooden stand that supported the group, so that her complaints, her mournfulness, inexplicable in the mouth of a girl of twenty, and which had in repose the purity of a Greek smile, seemed uttered at random and not to be spoken to anyone in especial. Nevertheless, Jenkins appeared restless, troubled, in spite of the obvious attention he paid the artist's work, or rather the artist herself, the triumphant grace of the girl, whom her beauty seemed to have pre-ordained to the study of the plastic arts.

Embarrassed by the admiring look she felt upon her, Felicia went on:

"By the way, I have seen him—your Nabob. He was pointed out to me last Friday at the Opera."

"You were there on Friday?"

"Yes—the Duke sent me his box."

Jenkins changed colour.

"I induced Constance to accompany me. It was the first time she had been at the Opera for twenty-five years, since her farewell performance. She was greatly moved. During the ballet, especially, she

trembled, her face was radiant, all her former triumphs sparkled in her eyes. How happy she is to have such emotions—A regular type, that Nabob. You must bring him round to me. It would amuse me to do his head"

"He! why, he is frightful! You did not see him properly."

"On the contrary. He was opposite us. That masque of a white Ethiopian would be superb in marble. And at any rate, not commonplace. Besides, as he is so ugly, you will not be so unhappy as you were last year when I made Mora's bust—what a wicked expression you used to put on at that time, Jenkins!"

"I would not care to pass through that time again for ten years of life," murmured Jenkins in a sombre voice. "But it amuses you to see people suffer."

"You are quite well aware that nothing amuses me," she said, shrugging her shoulders with supreme impertinence.

Then, without looking at him, without adding a word, she buried herself in one of those dumb fits of activity by which true artists escape from themselves and all their surroundings.

Jenkins walked a few paces in the studio, deeply moved, his lips swollen with confessions that did not venture to issue forth, and began two or three phrases that remained unanswered; at last, feeling himself dismissed, he took his hat and went towards the door.

"So, it's understood—you must bring him."

"Whom?"

"Why, the Nabob. It was you who only just now——"

"Oh, yes!" rejoined the strange creature, whose caprices did not last long. "Bring him, if you like. Otherwise I don't care."

And her beautiful, sad voice, in which something seemed broken, the weariness of her whole being, bore witness that in truth she did not care for anything in the world.

Jenkins went out very worried, with darkened brow. But, as soon as he was outside, he resumed a laughing and cordial expression, being of those who go masked in the streets.

Before going to the Nabob, Jenkins had another visit to pay, which seemed to bother him greatly. But, after all, he had promised it! So he said resolutely: "68, Rue Saint Ferdinand, aux Ternes," and jumped into his carriage.

They soon arrived at the end of a provincial, unfinished street, and reached the last house, a five-storied building, which the street itself seemed to have sent forth to reconnoitre and learn if it could continue in that direction. For the building was isolated among vague plots of ground awaiting the early raising of houses on them or filled with demolished materials, with hewn stone, old shutters leaning against nothing, mouldering planks whose iron bolts hung down, an immense charnel-house of an entire, demolished quarter.

"Studios, fifth floor," read Jenkins. He sighed, measured with his eye the distance separating the ground from the small balcony up above, near the clouds; then he made up his mind to go in. In the passage, he met one of the lodgers, who, on being asked, replied that M. Maranne lived on the fifth floor: "But," he added with an engaging smile, "the

stairs are not high." Thus encouraged, the Irishman proceeded to climb a narrow brand-new staircase with landings no larger than a step, a single door for every floor, and windows through which you could see a gloomily-paved court-yard and other staircase cages, all empty.

On the fourth floor, behind a door whose copper plate announced "M. Joyeuse, Expert Accountant," the doctor heard a noise of fresh laughter, of youthful chattering, of wild steps which accompanied him to the floor above, where there was a photographic establishment.

Those small industries, which are perched in corners and seem to have no communication with the world outside, are one of the surprises of Paris. You ask yourself how the people live who instal themselves in those trades, what meticulous Providence can send customers to a photographer living on the fifth floor in a vague spot, right at the top of the Rue Saint-Ferdinand, or books to keep to the accountant below. At this reflection, Jenkins smiled with pity, then went straight in, as the inscription, "Enter without knocking," invited him to do Alas! the permission was seldom abused. A tall, spectacled, young man, who was writing on a small table, his legs wrapped in a travelling rug, rose abruptly to meet the visitor whom his short sight had prevented him from recognising.

"Good day, André," said the doctor, holding out his loyal hand.

"Monsieur Jenkins!"

"You see, I am a good fellow, as always. Your conduct towards us, your obstinacy in living at a distance from your relations, enjoined a great reserve

on my dignity; but your mother cried. And here I am."

He looked, as he spoke, at the poor, little studio, whose bare walls, scanty furniture, brand-new photographic apparatus, small Prussian stove, which was also new and had never seen fire, were sadly lit up beneath the vertical light that fell from the glass roof. The drawn face, the slight beard of the young man, to whom the bright colour of his eye, his high, narrow forehead, his long, fair hair thrown back, gave the appearance of an illuminatus, everything was accentuated in the crude daylight, as well as the harsh will-power of that limpid regard which coldly stared at Jenkins, and opposed in advance an unconquerable resistance to all his reasons, all his protestations.

But the worthy Jenkins pretended not to perceive it.

"You know, my dear André. . . . from the day I married your mother, I have considered you as my son. I reckoned on leaving you my consulting room, my practice, on setting your foot in a gilded stirrup, happy in seeing you pursue a career devoted to the good of humanity. All of a sudden, without saying why, without caring for the effect such a rupture might have in the eyes of the world, you separated from us, you abandoned your studies, renounced your future, in order to plunge into I-know-not-what out-of-the-way life, taking up a ridiculous profession, which is the refuge and pretext of all the outcasts of society."

"I do it to live—it is a livelihood in the meantime."

"Until what? Until you win literary glory?"

He looked contemptuously at the scrawls scattered over the table.

"All that is not serious business. This is what I

have come to say· An opportunity is offered to you, a double door opening on the future. The Bethlehem Refuge is founded. The most beautiful of my humanitarian dreams is achieved. We have just bought a splendid villa at Nanterre to start our first establishment. I think of entrusting to you, as to an alter ego, the direction, the superintendence of the house. A princely dwelling, the salary of a divisional head, and the satisfaction of a service rendered to the great human family. Say the word, and I will take you to the Nabob—to the great-hearted man who is paying the expenses of our enterprise. Do you accept?"

"No," said the other, so drily that Jenkins was put out of countenance.

"Very good—I expected your refusal when I came here, but I came nevertheless I have taken as my motto: 'Do good and expect nothing.' And I remain true to my device. Well, we understand—you prefer a hazardous, undignified life, leading nowhere, to the honourable, worthy, fruitful existence, which I have just proposed to you——"

André made no reply, but his silence spoke for him.

"Take heed—you know what will be the result of your decision, a final estrangement, but you have always desired it. I need not tell you," continued Jenkins, "that to break with me is to break also with your mother. She and I are one."

The young man turned pale, hesitated a second, then spoke with an effort:

"If my mother likes to come and see me I shall be truly glad, but my determination to leave your house, to have nothing more to do with you, is irrevocable."

"At least say why."

He made a negative sign—he would not say why.

This time the Irishman grew really angry. His face took on a cunning, cruel expression, which would have greatly astonished those who only knew the good and loyal Jenkins; but he took care not to enter further into an explanation which he perhaps feared as much as he desired

"Good-bye," he cried from the threshold, half-turning his head, "and don't you ever appeal to us."

"Never," replied his stepson in a firm voice.

And now, when the doctor said to Joe, "Place Vendôme," the horse, as if it had understood that it was going to the Nabob's, proudly shook its glittering curb-chains, and the brougham dashed off at full speed, transforming each spoke of its wheels into a sun. "To come such a distance and meet with such a reception! A celebrity of the day to be treated like that by a Bohemian! Try and do good, indeed!"—Jenkins vented his wrath in a long monologue of this kind; then suddenly pulling himself together: "Ah! bah!" And whatever worry remained on his brow passed away quickly on the pavement of the Place Vendôme. Midday struck everywhere in the midst of sunlight. Issuing from its misty curtain, luxurious Paris, awake and moving, was beginning its whirling day. The shop-fronts in the Rue de la Paix were resplendent. The mansions in the Place appeared to arrange themselves in proud rows for the afternoon receptions; and right at the end of the Rue Castiglione, with its white arcades, the Tuileries, under the beautiful rays of a winter's sun, displayed its shivering statues, rosy with cold, among the devastation of the trees.

CHAPTER II

A Lunch in the Place Vendôme

There were not more than about twenty persons that morning in the Nabob's dining-room--a room in sculptured oak, which had but yesterday been provided by some big upholsterer, who had at the same time furnished the suite of four salons which could be half-seen through an open door, provided the papers for the ceilings, the art objects, the lustres, even to the plate on the side-boards, and the servants. It was, in fact, a house improvised by a gigantic parvenu, in a hurry to enjoy himself, as soon as he had got out of his railway carriage. Although there was not the least bit of feminine dress around the table, or a piece of light material to enliven it, the look of it was not monotonous, thanks to the disparity, the bizarreness of the guests, elements of all the worlds, scraps of humanity taken from every race, in France, in Europe, in the whole universe, from the top to the bottom of the social scale.

First of all, the master of the house, a kind of giant, tanned, swarthy, saffron-coloured, his head in his shoulders, to whom his short nose, lost in his bloated face, his curly hair massed like an Astrakhan cap on a low, obstinate forehead, his shaggy eyebrows overhang-

ing eyes wild like those of a beast entrapped, gave the ferocious look of a Kalmuck, of a border savage, living by war and rapine. Happily, the lower part of his face, the thick lips, which a lovable smile of kindliness would expand, relieved, suddenly altered, tempered with an expression like that of Saint Vincent de Paul, his fierce ugliness, his physiognomy which was so original that you forgot it was vulgar. And yet the low origin of the Nabob was revealed in another way by his voice—the voice of a Rhône boatman, hoarse and husky, in which the southern accent became rather coarse than hard, and by two broad, short hands, with square, hairy fingers, and without any show of nails, which, when placed upon the white table-cloth, spoke of their past with embarrassing eloquence.

Opposite him, on the other side of the table, sat the Marquis de Monpavon, but a Monpavon who did not in the least resemble the painted spectre we have already seen, a superb man, not showing age, with a big, majestic nose, a lordly mien, displaying a broad shirt-front of spotless linen, which creaked under his continuous effort to bulge his chest out, and swelled every time with the noise of a white turkey when it swells itself up, or a peacock spreading its plumage. The name of Monpavon suited him well.

Belonging to a great family, with rich relations, but ruined by gambling and speculations, the friendship of the Duke de Mora procured him a first-class receiver generalship. Unfortunately his health had not allowed him to keep this fine berth—well-informed people said that his health had nothing to do with it—and he had been living in Paris for a year, awaiting

his perfect recovery, he would say, before resuming his position. The same people affirmed that he would never resume it, and even that, were it not for powerful protectors—— Still, he was the most important personage at the lunch; that could be seen by the way in which the servants attended on him, and the Nabob consulted him, calling him "Monsieur le Marquis," as they do at the Comédie Française, less from deference than from pride, because of the honour reflected on himself. Full of disdain for his neighbours, the Marquis spoke little, in a very aloof manner, and as if bending towards those whom he honoured with his conversation. From time to time, he addressed over the table a few enigmatic phrases to the Nabob.

"I saw the Duke yesterday—spoke a great deal to me about you, *à propos* of that affair, you know—thingumbob—what d'you call it—I beg your pardon?"

"Really?—he spoke to you about me?" And the worthy Nabob, all in his glory, looked around him with ridiculous movements of the head, or assumed the devout air of a pious woman when she hears Our Saviour mentioned.

"His Excellency would be glad to see you enter into the ps—ps—into the thing."

"He told you so?"

"Ask the Governor—heard it like me."

He who was called the Governor (Paganetti was his real name) was a small, lively, gesticulating person, tiring to look at, so many various expressions did his face take on in one minute. He was director of the Caisse Territoriale of Corsica, a huge, financial undertaking, and had come to the house for the first time,

introduced by Monpavon; he therefore occupied the place of honour.

On the other side of the Nabob was an old man, buttoned up to his chin in a frock-coat without lapels and with an upright collar, like an Oriental tunic, his face seamed with innumerable little furrows, and a white moustache cut in military fashion. This was Brahim Bey, the most valiant colonel in the regency of Tunis, the aide-de-camp of the former Bey who had made Jansoulet's fortune. The glorious exploits of the warrior were inscribed in wrinkles, in marks of debauchery, on his lower lip that drooped as if distended, his lashless, inflamed, red eyes: such a head as you might see in the prisoners' dock in cases tried with closed doors.

The other guests had seated themselves quite casually in the order of their arrival or meeting, for the house was open to everybody, and covers were laid every morning for thirty persons.

There was also present the director of the theatre financed by the Nabob—Cardailhac, almost as famous for his wit as for his bankruptcies—a wonderful carver, who, as he detached the limbs of a partridge, would prepare one of his *bons mots*, and lay it together with a wing on the plate which was held out to him. He was a sculptor of wit rather than an improviser, and the new mode of serving the viands cut up beforehand, *à la russe*, had been fatal to him, by depriving him of any pretext for a preparatory silence. So it was generally said that he was on the down-grade. He was a Parisian, a dandy to the tips of his fingers, and, as he himself boasted, "with not a scrap of superstition in his whole body"—a fact which permitted him to give very piquant details about the

women of his theatre to Brahim Bey, who listened to him in the way in which one turned over the leaves of a bad book, and to speak theology to his nearest neighbour, a young priest, the curé of some little southern village, lean, with a skin as sunburnt as the cloth of his cassock, with ruddy cheekbones, and the pointed, prominent nose of ambitious men, who said to Cardailhac very loudly, in a tone of protection, of sacerdotal authority:

"We are very contented with M. Guizot. . . . He is getting on well, very well . . . it is a conquest for the Church."

By the side of this pontiff with his polished neck-band, old Schwalbach, the famous picture-dealer, exhibited his prophet-like beard, yellowed in parts like a dirty fleece, his three mouldy-hued overcoats, and the loose, negligent manners which were forgiven him in the name of art and because it was in good taste to have him in one's house at a time when the mania for picture-galleries was already absorbing millions, and he was the best man for such transactions of vanity. Schwalbach did not speak; he was satisfied with casting around him his enormous lens-shaped eye-glass, and with smiling in his beard at the singular neighbours to be found at this unique table.

Thus, M. de Monpavon had, quite close to him—and you should have seen how the disdainful curve of his nose became accentuated every time he looked in that direction—Garrigou, the singer, a countryman of Jansoulet, a distinguished ventriloquist, who sang Figaro in the patois of the south and was unequalled in his imitations of animals. A little further was Cabassu, another countryman, a little, short, stubby, bull-necked man, with Michelangelesque biceps, who had

in him something both of a Marseilles hair-dresser and of a holiday Hercules, a masseur, pedicure, manicure, and a little bit of a dentist. He laid his elbows on the table with the aplomb of a charlatan whom one sees in the morning and who knows the little infirmities, the private miseries of the family. M. Bompain completed this array of subordinates, who had at any rate some speciality. Bompain, the secretary, the intendant, the confidential clerk, through whose hands the whole business of the house passed; and it sufficed to see his solemnly stupid attitude, his vague expression, his Turkish fez placed clumsily on a head which resembled that of a village schoolmaster, to understand to what manner of person such colossal interests as those of the Nabob had been abandoned.

Lastly, to fill up the gaps among the figures already sketched, there were Orientals of all types—Tunisians, Moors, Egyptians, Levantines, and mingled with that exotic element, a Parisian Bohemia of many classes and reputations.

You would have thought that such a diversity of guests—I was about to say, of passengers—would have made the repast animated and noisy. Far from it. They all ate nervously, silently, observing one another out of the corners of their eyes, and even those who were most experienced in the world, who appeared most at their ease, had in their looks the absent and troubled expression of a fixed thought, a feverish anxiety that caused them to speak without replying, to listen without understanding a word of what had been said.

All at once the dining-room door is opened.

"Ah! here's Jenkins," said the Nabob in glad tones. "How do, how do, doctor? How are you, old fellow?"

A smile all round, an energetic handshake with the host, and Jenkins took a seat in front of the Nabob, by the side of Monpavon, before a couvert which a servant hastened to bring in, without receiving any orders, precisely as at a table d'hôte. In the midst of all those preoccupied and feverish faces, Jenkins at least contrasted by his good humour, his expansiveness, that talkative and flattering good-will that makes the Irish something like the Gascons of England. And what a robust appetite! with what animation, what freedom of conscience he worked his double row of white teeth, as he spoke:

"Well, Jansoulet! have you read?"

"What?"

"Do you mean you don't know? Haven't you read what the *Messager* says about you this morning?"

Under the deep swarthiness of his cheeks, the Nabob reddened like a child, and his eyes gleamed with pleasure:

"Is it true?—the *Messager* speaks about me?"

"Two whole columns. Why! didn't Moessard show it to you?"

"Oh!" replied Moessard modestly, "it wasn't worth while."

He was a little journalist, blonde and foppish, a rather handsome young man; but his face had that faded appearance which is peculiar to the waiters of night restaurants, to comedians, and to unfortunates, composed of conventional grimaces and the wan glare of gaslight. He was said to be the probable lover of an exiled queen of very easy virtue. It was whispered all around him, and gave him an envied and despicable renown in his social clique.

Jansoulet insisted that the article should be read, impatient to know what was being said of him. Unhappily, Jenkins had left his copy at the Duke's.

"Get me a *Messager*, quick," said the Nabob to the servant behind him.

Moessard intervened:

"It's all right, I am sure to have the thing about me."

And, with the *sans-façon* of a pot-house loafer, of a reporter who scribbles his "pars" with a bock before him, the journalist drew out a pocket-book full of notes, stamped papers, newspaper cuttings, glossy letters with crests, which he scattered over the table, pushing away his plate in order to look for the proof of his article.

"There it is." He passed it on to Jansoulet; but Jenkins protested:

"No, no, read it out loud."

Everybody agreeing, Moessard took back his proof and began to read aloud, THE BETHLEHEM REFUGE AND M. BERNARD JANSOULET, a long dithyramb in favour of artificial suckling, written from Jenkins' notes, as could be recognised by some high-sounding phrases which the Irishman affected—the long martyrology of childhood—the mercenariness of the breast—the beneficent nursing-goat—and ending, after a pompous description of the splendid establishment at Nanterre, with eulogy of Jenkins and glorification of Jansoulet: "O Bernard Jansoulet, benefactor of childhood."

You ought to have seen the vexed, scandalised looks of the guests. What an intriguer that Moessard was! What shameless toadyism! And the same envious, contemptuous smile distorted every mouth. The worst was that they were forced to applaud, to appear

enchanted, since the master of the house was not blasé with incense and took everything very seriously, both the article and the bravos it provoked. His broad face was radiant during the reading. Often, out there, afar off, he had dreamed of being thus apotheosised in the Parisian papers, of being somebody in that Society, which was the first in the world, on which the whole universe has its eyes fixed, as on a heavenly light. And now the dream was coming true. He looked at all the people at his table, the sumptuous dessert, the panelled dining-room, which was certainly as high as the church of his village; he listened to the dull sound of Paris rumbling and treading beneath his windows, with the inward feeling that he was going to become one of the big wheels of that active and complicated machinery. And then, in the feeling of well-being caused by the meal, between the lines of that triumphant panegyric, by an effect of contrast, he saw his own life unfolding itself, his wretched childhood, his adventurous youth, and, equally sad, the days without bread, the nights without a roof. Then, suddenly, the reading over, in the midst of an overflow of joy, of one of those southern impulses that force a man to think aloud, he cried out, turning to his guests with his frank, thick-lipped smile:

"Ah! my friends, my dear friends, if you knew how happy I am, what pride I feel!"

He had hardly been in Paris six weeks. Except two or three compatriots, the men he called his friends were persons he scarcely knew the day before, and that, through having lent them money. His sudden effusiveness seemed, therefore, rather extraordinary; but Jansoulet, too deeply moved to notice anything, went on:

"After what I have just heard, when I see myself in this great Paris, surrounded by all the most illustrious names, the most distinguished intellects, and then remember my father's stall! For I was born in a stall. My father sold old nails at the corner of a mile-stone at Bourg Saint-Andéol. We hardly had bread to eat every day and stew on Sundays. Ask Cabassu. He knew me then. He can tell you if I am lying. Oh! yes, I had a hard time." He lifted his head in an access of pride, as he sniffed the taste of the truffles which hung in the close air of the room. "I was hard up, and devilish hard up, for a long time. I was cold, I was hungry; I mean, you know, that awful hunger which makes you drunk, which gripes the stomach, makes you dizzy in the head, prevents you from seeing as if the inside of your eyes were scooped out with an oyster-knife. I spent days in bed, because I had no overcoat to go out in; I was happy, indeed, when I had a bed, which was not always the case. I tried to get my daily bread in all kinds of trades; and that bread cost me so dear, it was so black, so leathery, that I still have a bitter, mouldy taste in my mouth. And so it went on till I was thirty. Yes, my friends, at thirty—and I am not fifty—I was still a beggar, without a sou, without a future, tormented by the thought of my poor widowed mother who was dying of hunger at her stall, and to whom I was unable to give anything."

The expressions on the faces of the guests were curious, as they listened to their host telling the story of his "hard-up" days. Some seemed shocked, especially Monpavon. Such an exhibition of rags appeared to him in execrable taste, an absolute lack

of form. The sceptical and finicking Cardailhac, who hated emotional scenes, had a staring and, as it were, hypnotised look, as he cut up a piece of fruit at the end of his fork into slices as thin as cigarette paper. The Governor, on the other hand, acted the part of absorbed admiration, uttered exclamations of amazement, of pity; whilst, not far off, by way of a singular contrast, Brahmin Bey, the thunder-bolt of war, whom the reading of the article, followed by a speech after a copious repast, had plunged in restorative slumber, slept with his mouth open behind his white moustache, his face congested by his gorget, which kept rising up. But the most general expression was indifference or boredom. What did it concern them, I ask you, how Jansoulet spent his childhood at the Bourg-Saint-Andéol, what he had suffered, how he had tramped? They had not come for such idle tales as that. And so, an affectation of interest, eyes that counted the ovolos of the ceiling or the bread-crumbs on the table-cloth, mouths closed in order to restrain yawns, revealed the general impatience caused by the untimely story. As for the Nabob, he did not grow weary. He took pleasure in the recital of his past sufferings, even as a sailor in safe shelter recalls his voyages on distant seas, and dangers, and terrible shipwrecks. Next came the account of his good fortune, the prodigious piece of luck that had set him all at once on the road to fortune.

"I was wandering about in the harbour of Marseilles, with a mate as beggarly as myself, who has also since become rich through the Bey, and who, after having been my 'pal,' my partner, has become my cruellest enemy. I may as well tell you his name. The deuce! He is well enough known—Hemerlingue.

Yes, gentlemen, the head of the great banking firm of "Hemerlingue & Son," had not, at that time, even two sous to buy *clauvisses* on the quay. Intoxicated by the atmosphere of travel which prevails there, the idea came to us to go abroad, to go and seek a living in some sunny country, since the foggy countries were so cruel to us. But where should we go? We did what sailors sometimes do to find out in what den to 'bust' their money. They stick a bit of paper on the brim of a hat, and they turn the hat round on a stick; when it stops they take the direction it points to. Well, the paper pointed to Tunis. Eight days afterwards I disembarked at Tunis, with half a louis in my pocket, and to-day I am back with twenty-five millions!"

There was an electric shock round the table, a sparkle in every eye, even in those of the servants. Cardailhac cried: "Marvellous!" Monpavon's nose became humanised.

"Yes, old fellows, twenty-five solid millions, without mentioning all I have left in Tunis, my two palaces at the Bardo, my ships in the harbour of Goletta, my diamonds, my jewelry, which are certainly worth more than double. And you know," he said with his kindly smile, his hoarse, vulgar voice, "when that is all gone, there will be still more."

Everyone at table rose, galvanised.

"Bravo! bravo!"

"Magnificent!"

"Well done!"

"Marvellous!"

"A man like that ought to be a deputy."

"He will be, per Bacco, I'll answer for it," said the Governor in resounding tones; and, in a transport

of admiration, not knowing how to express his enthusiasm, he seized the Nabob's fat, hairy hand, and raised it to his lips, without thinking. They are demonstrative in that country. Everybody was standing up; they did not take their seats again.

Jansoulet, radiant, had risen in his turn, and throwing down his napkin:

"Let's have coffee."

A joyous tumult at once spread over the huge reception rooms, to which the gilding alone gave light, ornament, sumptuousness.

When the coffee had been served Eastern fashion, with all the grounds in it, in small cups filigreed in silver, the guests gathered round, hurriedly drinking, scalding themselves, watching one another, keeping a particular eye on the Nabob, and the favourable moment for pouncing upon him, dragging him into a corner of the huge rooms, and then negotiating their loans.

It is the worthy Jenkins who makes a start. He takes his friend Jansoulet to a window-recess, and submits the plans of the Nanterre establishment. A great score, getting that house, by Jove! One hundred and fifty thousand francs for purchase, then considerable expenses for fitting it up, the staff, the bedding, the nursing-goats, the manager's carriage, the omnibuses to meet the children by each train—a good deal of money—but how well off they will be then, the dear little creatures; what a service rendered to Paris, to humanity! The Government could not help rewarding such disinterested devotion to philanthropy with a bit of red ribbon. "The Cross, 15th August"—those magic words give Jenkins all he wants. In his joyful, thick voice, which always seems

to be hailing a boat in a fog, the Nabob calls: "Bompain." The man with the fez, tearing himself away from the liqueurs, crosses the room majestically, whispers, departs and returns with an inkstand and a cheque-book, whose leaves detach themselves, fly away, of their own accord. A fine thing riches! To sign on his knee a cheque for two hundred thousand francs costs Jansoulet no more than pulling a louis out of his pocket.

Furious, their noses in their cups, the others watch the little scene from a distance. Then, when Jenkins goes off, light-hearted, smiling, saluting the different groups with a gesture, Monpavon catches hold of the Governor: "Our turn." And the two, rushing upon the Nabob, drag him to a divan, seat him by force, enclose him between them with a slight, ferocious laugh that seems to mean: "What shall we do to him?" Get money out of him, as much money as we can. Money is wanted to float again the Caisse Territoriale, which ran aground years ago, and is sunk in quicksand up to the top of its masts. A magnificent operation that second floating, if you would believe those gentlemen; for the submerged Caisse is filled with ingots, with precious stuffs, with the thousand varied riches of a new country of which every one speaks and which nobody knows. When founding that unparalleled enterprise, Paganetti of Porto Vecchio aimed at monopolising the exploitation of the whole of Corsica: iron, sulphur, and copper mines, marble quarries, coral fisheries, oyster banks, ferruginous and sulphurous waters, vast forests of thuyas and royal oaks, and, to facilitate the exploitation, he proposed to construct a line of railways across the island, as well as a line of steamers. Such is the gigantic work

to which he has harnessed himself. Considerable capital has been swallowed up in it, and it is the newcomer—the worker of the eleventh hour—who will reap all the benefit.

Whilst, with his Italian accent and exaggerated gestures, the Corsican enumerates the "splendours" of the affair, Monpavon, haughty and dignified, nods convinced approval, and, from time to time, when he thinks the moment suitable, he lets drop the name of the Duke de Mora, which always has its effect on the Nabob.

"Well, how much would it need?"

"Millions," answers Monpavon proudly, in the tone of a man who is not embarrassed about finding them elsewhere. "Yes, millions. But the thing is splendid. And, as His Excellency stated, a capitalist would thus reach a high position, even political office. Just think! in a country without money, you might become Councillor-General, deputy" ——The Nabob starts—— And little Paganetti, who feels the fish biting:

"Yes, deputy, you will be deputy, when I give the word. At a sign from me, the whole of Corsica is at your feet." He then launches into a bewildering improvisation, counting the votes of which he disposes, the cantons that will rise at his call. "You bring me your capital, and I give you a whole people." The matter is settled.

"Bompain, Bompain," calls the Nabob in enthusiasm. He is only afraid that the thing may slip out of his hands; and, in order to secure Paganetti, who has not concealed his lack of funds, he hastens to pay a first instalment to the Caisse Territoriale. Again the man in the red skull-cap

appears with the cheque-book, which he presses gravely to his chest. Again Jansoulet's signature on one of the leaves, which the Governor pockets with a negligent air and which causes a sudden transformation in his person. Paganetti, so humble, so abject just now, goes off with the aplomb of a man with a balance of four hundred thousand francs, whilst Monpavon, holding himself more stiffly even than his wont, follows him closely and keeps guard over him with more than paternal anxiety.

"That's good 'biz,'" said the Nabob to himself. "I shall now be able to have my coffee." But ten spongers await him as he passes. The readiest, the smartest, is Cardailhac, the manager, who snaps him up and carries him into a side-room: "Let's chat a bit, dear man. I want to explain to you the position of our theatre." Doubtless, the situation was very complicated; for here is M. Bompain again with the fugitive leaves. Whose turn now? Moessard, the journalist, comes to be paid for the *Messager* article; the Nabob must know what it costs to be called "the benefactor of childhood" in the morning papers. Next comes the provincial curé, who asks for money to rebuild his church, and takes the cheques by assault with the brutality of a Peter the Hermit. Then comes old Schwalbach, his nose in his beard, mysteriously winking his eye, "Hush! he has found a pearl" for Monsieur's gallery—a Hobbema which comes from the Duke de Mora's collection. But there are several who covet it. It will be difficult. "I want it at any price," says the Nabob, allured by the name of Mora. "Listen, Schwalbach, I must have that *Nobbema*. Twenty thousand francs for you if you procure it."

"I shall do my best, Monsieur Jansoulet."

And the old rascal calculates, even as he turns to leave, that the Nabob's twenty thousand added to the ten thousand promised by the Duke, if he rids him of the picture, will leave him a very nice profit.

Presently, after many such interviews, the Nabob's last client being sent on his way, the apartment in the Place Vendôme was growing empty in the doubtful light of four o'clock, that end of November days which are afterwards prolonged so many hours by artificial light. The servants were taking away the coffee, the raki, and the open, half-empty cigar-boxes. The Nabob, believing himself alone, sighed comfortably: "Oof! it's all over." But no. Somebody opposite him leaves a corner which is already dark, and approaches with a letter in his hand.

Again!

And at once, mechanically, the poor man makes an eloquent, deprecatory gesture, like some jobber Instinctively, too, the visitor shrank so quickly, with such an offended look, that the Nabob understood he had made a mistake, and took the trouble to examine the young man standing before him, simply but correctly dressed, of wan complexion, without the smallest bristle of a beard, regular features, perhaps rather too serious and reserved for his age, which, together with his pale, blonde hair in little curls, like a powdered wig, gave him the appearance of a young deputy of the Third Estate under Louis XVI., the head of a Barnave at twenty. His face was not altogether unfamiliar to the Nabob, though he saw it for the first time.

"What is it you desire, sir?"

Taking the letter which the young man handed him, he went to a window to read it.

"Ah! it's from mama."

He said it so gravely; that word "mama" lit up his face with so young, so kindly a smile, that the visitor, who was at first repelled by the vulgar look of the parvenu, felt full of sympathy for him.

The Nabob read half-aloud the few lines written in a large, ungrammatical, tremulous hand, contrasting with the large, glossy paper, which was headed: "Château de Saint-Romans."

"My dear son, this letter will be handed you by the eldest son of M. de Géry, the former J.P. of Bourg-Saint-Andéol, who showed himself so good to us."

The Nabob broke off:

"I ought to have recognised you, Monsieur de Géry. You look like your father. Pray sit down."

He then finished reading the letter. His mother did not ask anything definite of him, but recommended M. Paul to him, in the name of the services the De Géry family had once rendered them. An orphan, with two younger brothers under his care, M. Paul had been called to the Bar in the south, and was coming to Paris to seek his fortune. She begged Jansoulet to help him, "because he had great need of it, poor fellow." And she signed herself: "Your mother, who pines for you, Françoise."

This letter of his mother, whom he had not seen for six years, those southern expressions in which he recognised a well-known voice, that big handwriting which brought before him an adored face, all wrinkled,

sunburnt, furrowed, but laughing beneath a peasant's coif, had stirred the Nabob's feelings. During the six weeks he had been in France, lost in the whirl of Paris, of his house-furnishing, he had not yet thought of his dear old woman; and now he saw her again completely in those lines. He remained a moment looking at the letter, which trembled between his big fingers.

Then, his fit of emotion over:

"Monsieur de Géry," he said, "I am glad of the opportunity that allows me to return you some part of the kindnesses which your family showed mine. From to-day, if you agree to it, I will take you with me. You are well educated, you seem intelligent, you may render me great services. I have numerous schemes, numerous enterprises. I am mixed up with a crowd of great industrial undertakings. I want some one to help me, who may be my substitute in case of need. I have, it's true, a secretary, a steward, that dear old Bompain; but the poor fellow knows nothing of Paris, he has quite lost his wits since he arrived. You will tell me that you, too, come from the provinces. But that doesn't matter. Well brought up as you are, a Southerner, alert and smart, you will soon know all about the Boulevards. Besides, I undertake to complete your education from that standpoint. In a few weeks, I answer for it, you will have as sure a footing in Paris as I have."

Poor man! It was piteous to hear him speak of his Parisian footing and his experience, he who was destined always to remain in the début stage.

"That's settled, isn't it? I take you as secretary. You will have a fixed salary, which we shall arrange

about presently; and I will afford you the opportunity of quickly making your fortune."

And as De Géry, relieved suddenly from all the uncertainties with which he arrived, as a petitioner, a neophyte, did not budge from fear of waking out of a dream:

"Now," said the Nabob in a soft voice, "sit down there, near me, and let us talk a little of mama."

CHAPTER III

A Début in Society

"Monsieur Bernard Jansoulet!"

The plebeian name, proudly emphasised by the footmen, shouted in a resonant voice, sounded in Jenkins's salons like the stroke of a cymbal, one of those gongs which in pantomimes herald fantastic apparitions. The lustres paled, there was a sparkle of fire in every eye at the dazzling prospect of Oriental treasures. Showers of sequins and pearls produced by the magic syllables of a name which was unknown yesterday.

He, it was he, the Nabob, the richest of the rich, the greatest of Paris lions, spiced with that ragoût of adventures which possesses such attraction for surfeited people. Every head turned, all talk was interrupted; there was a rush to the door, a crush, as on a pier in a seaport town to see the entrance of a felucca laden with gold.

Jenkins himself, who was courteous, so self-composed, who was in the first salon to receive the guests, abruptly left the group of men with whom he was, and rushed to meet the galleons.

"Too, too kind of you—Madame Jenkins will be very happy, very proud. Come and let me present you."

And in his haste, in the joy of his vanity, he led off Jansoulet so quickly that the latter had no time to introduce to him his companion, Paul de Géry, whom he was introducing into Society. The young man was very happy to be forgotten. He merged himself in the mass of black coats, which was continually being thrust back at every fresh arrival, buried himself in it, seized by that foolish terror which every young provincial feels when introduced into a Paris salon, especially when he is intelligent and refined, and does not wear the imperturbable aplomb of a rustic, like a coat of mail, beneath his linen shirt-front. From the spot where he found himself he watched the curious procession of Jenkins's guests, which did not end at midnight. They were all patients of the fashionable doctor: the cream of society, many politicians and financiers, bankers, deputies, artists, all the overstrained personages of Parisian society, pale with glittering eyes, saturated with arsenic like gluttonous mice, but insatiable of poison and of life.

Presently, amid the murmur of conversations, a resonant, brassy voice would burst out. It was that of the Nabob, who would calmly manœuvre through that social conservatory with the assurance based upon his immense fortune and a certain contempt for women, which he had derived from the East.

And now, sprawling on a seat, his large, yellow-gloved hands crossed carelessly one on the other, he was talking with a very beautiful woman whose striking countenance—a great deal of life in severe features—stood out in its pallor amid the surrounding faces, just as her white dress, with its classic folds, moulded on her supple, graceful figure, contrasted with richer gowns, none of which, however, had the same

charm of bold simplicity. De Géry, from his corner, admired her small forehead beneath the low fringe of hair, her long, open, deep-blue eyes, her mouth that only stopped smiling when it relaxed its pure form in a tired, drooping expression. On the whole, she had the rather haughty appearance of an exceptional individuality.

Some one near him named her Félicia Ruys. He then understood the rare attraction of the young woman, the heiress of her father's genius, whose growing fame had reached even his province, aureoled by a reputation for beauty. Whilst he looked at her and admired her least gestures, a little interested by the enigma of the beautiful face, he heard whispering behind him:

"But see how amiable she is with the Nabob. If the Duke were to come——"

"Is the Duke going to be here?"

"Certainly. The soirée is given for him, so that he may meet Jansoulet."

"And you think that the Duke and Mademoiselle Ruys——"

"Where do you come from? All Paris knows of the *liaison*. It dates from the last Exhibition, where her bust of him was on view."

"And the Duchess?"

"Bah! there have been a good many others. Ah! Madame Jenkins is going to sing."

There was a movement in the salon, a greater pressure near the door, and the conversations ceased for a moment. Paul de Géry breathed again. What he had just heard had gripped his heart. He felt himself soiled, dirtied by the handful of mud cast at the ideal he had conceived of that splendid beauty,

ripened in the sun of art with so penetrating a charm.

He went some way off, changed his position. He was afraid of overhearing some other infamy being whispered. The voice of Madame Jenkins did him good—a voice famous in the Paris salons, and which, despite all its brilliancy, had nothing theatrical in it, but seemed like the speech of emotion vibrating on untaught chords. The singer, a woman of forty to forty-five, had magnificent flaxen hair, delicate, rather soft features, an expression of great kindliness. Still handsome, she was dressed in the expensive taste of a woman who has not renounced pleasing. And, indeed, she did please; she had married the doctor ten years before as her second husband, and they seemed to be still in their honeymoon of happiness. Whilst she was singing a popular Russian air, wild and sweet as a Slavonian smile, Jenkins was naively proud, and he did not try to dissemble it, all his broad face beaming; and she, whenever she bent her head to take breath, turned to him with a timid, loving smile, which sought him above the spread-out music. Then, when she had finished in the midst of an admiring and spell-bound murmur, it was touching to see how discreetly and furtively she pressed her husband's hand, as if to procure herself a moment of intimate happiness amid her great triumph. Young De Géry was feeling comforted at the sight of this happy couple, when a voice murmured quite near him, but it was not the same voice as before:

"You know what they say—that the Jenkins are not married."

"What absurdity!"

"It is so. It appears there is a genuine Madame

Jenkins somewhere, but not the one we know. Besides, have you noticed——"

The dialogue continued in low tones. Madame Jenkins came up, bowing, smiling, whilst the doctor, stopping a passing tray, brought her a glass of Bordeaux with the empressement of a mother, an impresario, a lover. Calumny, calumny, ineffaceable pollution! Jenkins's attentions now seemed exaggerated to the provincial. He found that there was something affected, artificial in them, and likewise, in the thanks she whispered to her husband, he thought he noticed a timidity, an abjectness, opposed to the dignity of a legitimate spouse, happy and proud, of assured happiness. "But Society is hideous!" said De Géry to himself, frightened, his hands cold. The smiles around him conveyed to him the impression of grimaces. He was ashamed and disgusted. Then suddenly revolting: "Come now! it's not possible." And, as if in answer to his cry, calumny continued behind him, in an off-hand tone:

"After all, you know, I am not otherwise certain. I merely repeat what has been said to me. Ah! the Baroness Hemerlingue—— That Jenkins has the whole of Paris here."

The Baroness was advancing, on the doctor's arm, who had hastened to meet her, and, master as he was of all the muscles of his face, he seemed rather troubled and discomfited. The worthy Jenkins had thought to make use of his soirée, so as to bring about a reconciliation between his friend Hemerlingue and his friend Jansoulet, his two wealthiest patients, who embarrassed him a great deal by their intestine war. The Nabob wished for nothing better. He was not angry with his old "pal." Their quarrel had

arisen in consequence of Hemerlingue's marriage with one of the favourites of the former Bey. "All about a woman, in fact," Jansoulet would say, and he would have been glad to see the end of it, as any antipathy weighed on his exuberant nature But it appears the Baron did not care for a rapprochement; and, in spite of the promise he had given Jenkins, his wife came by herself, to the Irishman's great annoyance.

She was a tall, thin, frail woman, with eyebrows like birds' feathers, young and timid-looking, appearing twenty though thirty years old, coifed with grasses and ears of corn that drooped on to her black hair, spangled with diamonds. With long eye-lashes, and cheeks white with the clear tint of women who have been confined in the house a long time, rather embarrassed by her Parisian attire, she did not so much look like a former woman of the harem as like a nun who has renounced her vows and returned to the world. There was something pious, prim in her deportment, a certain ecclesiastical manner of walking with her eyes on the ground, her elbows pressed to her sides, her hands crossed, manners borrowed from the religious environment where she had lived since her conversion and recent baptism, which completed the resemblance. You may imagine with what curiosity the people pressed round this former odalisque, now become a fervent Catholic, who was advancing, escorted by a livid face like that of a spectacled sacristan, Maître Le Merquier, the Deputy of Lyons, Hemerlingue's manager, who used to accompany the Baroness when the Baron "was a trifle indisposed," as on this night.

On their entering the second salon, the Nabob came straight to her, thinking he would see behind

her the bloated face of his old comrade, to whom it was agreed that he would offer his hand. The Baroness perceived him, became still whiter. A steely flash filtered beneath her long lashes. Her nostrils opened, palpitated, and, as Jansoulet bowed, she hurried on, her head high and erect, letting fall from her thin lips an Arab word, which nobody knew, but which the poor Nabob himself well understood to be an insult; for, as he rose from bowing, his tanned face was of the colour of baked clay as it leaves the furnace. He remained an instant without moving, his big fists clenched, his mouth swollen with rage. Jenkins came up to him, and De Géry, who had followed the whole scene from a distance, saw them conversing animatedly, with an anxious air.

It had been a failure. The reconciliation, which had been so shrewdly planned, would not take place. Hemerlingue did not wish for it. If only the Duke did not break his word. He was late. La Wauters, who, when the theatre was over, was to sing the air of "La Nuit" from "La Flûte Enchantée," had just come in, all muffled up in a lace hood.

And the Minister was not there.

Still, it was an understood arrangement, a promise. Monpavon was to take him on from the club. Now and then the worthy Jenkins pulled out his watch, whilst casting an absent-minded "bravo!" to the cluster of pearly notes which La Wauters poured forth from her fairy lips, a cluster costing three thousand francs, absolutely thrown away, like the other expenses of the soirée, if the Duke did not come.

Suddenly the door opened wide:

"His Excellency the Duke de Mora."

He was welcomed by a prolonged murmur, a

respectful curiosity which expressed itself in two orderly lines, instead of the brutal pressure which had followed the entrance of the Nabob.

No one knew better than the Duke how to make his appearance in Society, to cross a salon with gravity, to ascend the tribune smiling, to bestow seriousness on futile things, to treat lightly serious things; it was the summing-up of his attitude in life, a paradoxical idiosyncrasy. Still handsome, in spite of his fifty-six years, of a beauty composed of elegance and proportion, in which the grace of a dandy was fortified by something military in his figure and the pride of his face, he looked wonderfully well in his black coat, and, in honour of Jenkins, had put on some of his orders which he was not in the habit of displaying except on official days.

What a life he led! Politics, gambling in all its forms, stock exchange speculation and baccarat, and the reputation of a lady-killer which he wanted to maintain at all costs. Ah! he was a real patient of Jenkins; and he truly owed his princely visit to the inventor of the mysterious Pearls which gave his glance such a fire, and his whole being such magnetic and extraordinary energy.

"My dear Duke, allow me to——"

Monpavon, solemn, with expanded chest, tried to make the much-expected presentation; but His Excellency, absent-minded, did not hear, went on towards the grand salon, carried away by one of those electric currents which break the monotony of Society. As he passed, and whilst he greeted beautiful Madame Jenkins, the women bent forward a little, with alluring looks, soft laughter, a desire to please. But he saw only one, Felicia, standing in the centre of a group of

men, discussing as if in the middle of her studio, and who saw the Duke coming, as she calmly took a sherbet. She welcomed him with perfect naturalness. The people around had discreetly withdrawn. Nevertheless, and in spite of what De Géry had heard about their alleged relations, there seemed to be nothing between them but a merely intellectual companionship, a playful intimacy.

"I called on you, Mademoiselle, as I went to the Bois."

"They told me so. You even went into the studio."

"And I saw the famous group—my group."

"Well?"

"It is very fine. The greyhound is racing like mad—the fox is scampering away magnificently. Only, I did not quite understand. You told me it represented the story of us two?"

"Ah! there you are. Find out. It is a fable I read in—— You don't read Rabelais?"

"No, by Jove. He is too coarse."

"Well, I have learnt to read him. Badly brought up, you know. Oh! very bad! So my fable is taken from Rabelais. Here it is: Bacchus has made a prodigious fox, which can't be caught in running. Vulcan, on the other hand, has given a dog of his fashioning the power of catching every animal it pursues. 'Now,' as my author says, 'it happened they met.' You see what a mad and interminable race it is. It seems, my dear Duke, that destiny has thus brought us together, endowed with contrary qualities; you have received from the gods the gift of winning every heart, whilst I have a heart that will never be captured."

She said it to him, face to face, almost laughing, but closely embraced and upright in her white tunic which seemed to guard her person against the liberties of her mind. He, the irresistible conqueror, had never met before one of that bold and self-willed species. So he enveloped her in all the magnetic effluvia of his seductiveness, whilst, around them, the growing noise of the fête, the fluted laughter, the rustling of satins and fringes of pearls, played the accompaniment to this duet of worldly passion and youthful irony.

He resumed after a minute:

"But how did the gods get out of their mistake?"

"By changing both the racers into stone."

"Well," said he, "that is a dénoûment which I do not accept. I defy the gods ever to petrify my heart."

A brief flame flashed from his eyes, which was immediately extinguished as he remembered that people were looking at them.

Indeed, they were very much looked at, but by no one so inquisitively as by Jenkins, who roamed around them, impatient, irritated, as if he was angry with Felicia for engrossing the important personage of the soirée. The young woman laughingly called the Duke's attention to it:

"They will say that I monopolise you."

She showed him Monpavon standing up and waiting near the Nabob, who was looking towards His Excellency from a distance with the imploring, submissive eyes of a big, good-natured hound. The Minister of State then remembered why he had come. He bowed to the young woman and returned to Monpavon, who was at last able to introduce "his honourable friend, M. Bernard Jansoulet." His Excellency bowed, the

parvenu humbled himself to the ground, and then they talked a short while.

A strange group to watch. Jansoulet, tall, powerful, vulgar-looking, tanned, his broad back arched, as if it had been rounded for ever by the salamaleks of Oriental courtiership, his short, big hands bursting his light gloves, his excessive gesticulation, his southern exuberance cutting his words short, like a punch. The other, a gentleman by blood, a man of the world, elegance itself, pleasing in his least gestures, which were very rare, negligently dropping unfinished phrases, lighting up with a half-smile the gravity of his face, concealing under an imperturbable politeness the great contempt he had for men and women; and his strength was chiefly due to this contempt. In an American salon, the antithesis would have been less startling. The Nabob's millions would have restored the balance and even made the scale turn in his favour. But Paris does not yet set money above all the other powers, and, to realise it, it sufficed to see that big contractor fidgeting with an amiable expression before the grand seigneur, throwing beneath his feet, like a courtier's ermine cloak, his dull-witted, rich man's pride.

From the corner where he had hidden himself, De Géry was watching the scene with interest, knowing what importance his friend attached to the introduction, when chance, which had so cruelly, during the whole evening, given the lie to his innocent faiths, conveyed to him a brief dialogue, that took place near him, amid the buzz of private conversations, in which everyone hears just the word that interests him:

"It is the least Monpavon can do to introduce him

to some good acquaintances. He has procured him so many bad ones. You know that he has just fastened Paganetti and his whole gang round his neck."

"Poor man!—why, they will devour him."

"Bah! it's only just that he should be made to disgorge a bit. He robbed the Turks of a lot."

"Really! do you believe it?"

"Do I believe it? I've got very precise details about it from Baron Hemerlingue, the banker who raised the last Tunisian loan. He knows a few stories, he does, about the Nabob. Just fancy——"

And the slanders began. Jansoulet had dishonestly exploited the old Bey for fifteen years. Names of tradespeople and marvellous tricks of insolent effrontery were quoted; for instance, the story of a musical frigate, yes, really, a musical frigate, like a dining-room picture, for which he had paid two hundred thousand francs, and sold again for four millions, a throne sold for three millions, the bill for which could be seen in an upholsterer's books in the Faubourg Saint Honoré, and did not amount to one hundred thousand francs; and the most comical part was that, the Bey having changed his mind, the royal seat had fallen into disgrace even before it was unpacked, and was still nailed up in its box at the Tripoli Custom-House.

Next, and in addition to these shameful commissions on the despatch of the smallest toy, more serious, but equally irrefutable accusations were dwelt upon, irrefutable because they all came from the same source. There was, besides the seraglio, a harem of European women excellently selected for His Highness by the Nabob, who should know about the

business, since he had once followed in Paris, before his departure for the East, the most singular professions: manager of a night-house and even worse—— And the whispers ended in a stifled laugh—the thick-lipped laugh of men who are talking intimately between themselves.

The first impulse of the young provincial, as he heard those infamous slanders, was to turn round and cry out:

"You are lying."

A few hours earlier he would have done so without hesitation; but since then he had learnt mistrust, scepticism. He therefore restrained himself, and listened to the end, without moving, feeling deep within him an unavowed desire to know better the man he was serving. As for the Nabob, the utterly unconscious subject of the hideous chronicle, calmly installed in a small salon to which blue hangings and two shaded lamps lent a subdued appearance, he was playing a game of écarté with the Duke de Mora.

O magic galleon! The son of the second-hand nail-seller, alone at a gaming-table, face to face with the first personage of the Empire! Jansoulet scarcely believed the Venetian mirror that reflected his radiant face and the Duke's august skull, divided by a broad parting. Around them was a circle of spectators, at a respectful distance, the ten paces required for saluting a prince. The robust nature of Jansoulet, that civilised savage, was more than ordinarily sensitive to such unknown refinements; and he had to use his whole strength in order not to manifest by a few triumphant hurrahs, by an untimely effusiveness of word and gesture, the feeling of physical joy that filled his whole being, as happens sometimes to those

big mountain dogs, which a drop of inhaled spirits throws into epileptic madness.

* * * * *

"The sky is beautiful, the pavement dry. If you like, my dear boy, we shall dismiss the carriage and go back on foot," said Jansoulet to his companion, on leaving Jenkins's.

De Géry hastened to accept. He had need of walking, of shaking off in the eager air the infamies and lies of that society-comedy which left his heart cold and tightened, and drove all his life-blood to his temples, in which he could hear the swollen veins throb. And so, that great artist, with her glorious name, that pure, wild beauty, the mere sight of whom had troubled him like an apparition, was only a courtesan. Madame Jenkins, that imposing woman, with a demeanour at once so dignified and so sweet, did not bear the name of Madame Jenkins. That famous scientist, with his open face, his cordial welcome, had the impudence thus to parade a disgraceful concubinage. Lastly, Jansoulet himself, so good, so generous, for whom he felt so much gratitude in his heart, he knew to have fallen into the hands of a troop of bandits, a bandit himself and a fitting prey to the exploitation organised for making him disgorge his millions.

Was it possible, and what should he believe of it?

Meanwhile the worthy Jansoulet, ignorant cause of the mental conflict, was walking with big strides next his young friend, inhaling the air with delight from the end of his lighted cigar. He had never been so happy to be alive: and Jenkins' soirée, his entry into Society, had left on him an impression of arches decorated as for a triumph, of assembled crowds, of

flowers strewn as he passed. So true is it that things only exist in the eyes that look at them. What a success! The Duke, at the moment of parting, invited him to come and see his gallery; which meant that the gates of Mora's mansion were opened to him within a week. Felicia Ruys had agreed to sculpture his bust, so that at the next Exhibition the son of the nail-seller would have his marble portrait by the same great artist who had put her name to that of the Minister. Was not that a complete appeasement of all his child-like vanities?

And the two men, ruminating over their respectively sombre and joyous thoughts, walked one beside the other, absorbed, absent-minded, so that the Place Vendôme, silent, flooded with a blue, icy light, resounded beneath their steps without their having exchanged a word.

"Already," said the Nabob. "I should have liked to walk a bit more. Do you mind?" And, as they went twice or three times round the place, he vented in gusts the huge joy that filled him:

"How splendid it is! What pleasure to breathe! Heavens! I would not sell to-night's soirée for a hundred thousand francs. What a fine fellow that Jenkins is. Do you like Felicia Ruys' type of beauty? I am mad on it. And the Duke, what a real nobleman! so simple, so polite. Paris is beautiful, isn't it, my son?"

"It's too complicated for me—it frightens me," replied Paul de Géry in a muffled voice.

"Yes, yes, I understand," rejoined the other, with amusing conceit. "You are not yet accustomed to it, but you soon will be. Why, look at me; in a month I have made myself quite at home."

"But then you had already been in Paris—you once lived here."

"I? Never in my life. Who told you so?"

"Oh, I thought"—answered the young man; and, as all at once a crowd of reflections rushed into his brain:

"What have you done to that Baron Hemerlingue? There is a deadly hatred between you."

The Nabob was taken aback for a minute. Hemerlingue's name, thrown suddenly into his cup of delight, recalled to him the only unpleasant incident of the soirée.

"In his case, as in other cases," said he, with saddened voice, "I have never done anything but good. We began together in a wretched plight. We grew, prospered side by side. When he wished to go 'on his own hook,' I always helped him, supported him as best I could. It was I who procured him, for ten consecutive years, the contracts for the fleet and army; that's where he made almost all his fortune. Then, one fine morning, what does that idiot of a heavy-blooded Bernese do but go and get mad on an odalisque, whom the Bey's mother had expelled from the harem? The creature was pretty, ambitious, she made him marry her, and naturally, after that fine marriage, Hemerlingue was obliged to leave Tunis. They made him believe that I urged the Bey to banish him from the principality. It is not true. On the contrary, I obtained permission from His Highness for Hemerlingue's son, a child by his first wife, to remain in Tunis to watch over their interests which were in danger, whilst the father went to Paris to found his banking firm. Well, I have been well rewarded for my kindness.

"When, at the death of my poor Ahmed, the Mouchir, his brother, ascended the throne, the Hemerlingues returned to favour, have never ceased doing me dis-services with the new master. The Bey is always friendly; but my credit is shaken. Well! in spite of that, in spite of all the bad turns Hemerlingue has played me, which he is still playing me, I was ready to-night to hold out my hand to him. Not only does the scoundrel refuse, but he lets his wife insult me—his wife, a savage, wicked beast, who can never forgive me for not having wanted to receive her at Tunis. Do you know what she called me as she passed me to-night? 'Thief and son of a dog!' Doesn't mince words, the odalisque. What I say is that if I did not know my Hemerlingue to be as white-livered as he is fat—— After all, bah! Let them say what they please. I laugh at them. What can they do against me? Ruin me with the Bey? It's all the same to me. I have nothing more to do in Tunisia, and I shall retire from it as soon as I can. There is only one town, one country in the world, and that is Paris—hospitable, friendly, unsqueamish Paris, where all intelligent men find ample room to do great things.

"And, now, you see, De Géry, I want to do great things. I have had enough of mercantile life. I have worked twenty years for money; now I am glutt..ious for glory, respect, fame. I wish to be somebody in my country's history, and that will be easy. With my immense fortune, my knowledge of men and of business, and what I feel here in my head, I may attain to anything and I aspire to everything. So, believe me, my dear boy, never leave me" (you would have thought he was answering his young companion's secret thought), "stick to the ship. The masts are

strong; my bunkers are full of coal. I swear that we shall go far, and quick, by God!"

There is in youth a warmth of heart, a need of enthusiasm, which the least touch awakens. As the Nabob spoke, De Géry felt his suspicions fly and all his sympathy stir again, with a shade of pity. No, certainly, this man was not a rogue, but a poor, deluded creature to whom fortune had given a "swelled head," like a wine too heavy for a stomach long used to water. Alone in the midst of Paris, surrounded by enemies and spongers, Jansoulet impressed him as a traveller on foot, laden with gold, crossing a wood haunted by dangerous characters, in the dark and without arms. And he thought it would be well for the protégé to watch over his benefactor, without appearing to do so, to become the clear-sighted Telemachus of this blind Mentor, to point out to him the quagmires, to defend him against robbers, in fine, to help him in the fight amid the swarms of nocturnal ambushes, which he felt were ferociously in wait around the Nabob and his millions.

CHAPTER IV

The Joyeuse Family

Every morning of the year, at punctually eight o'clock, a new, almost uninhabited house, in an obscure quarter of Paris, resounded with cries, calls, pretty laughs, that rang clear through the deserted staircase:

"Father, don't forget my music.

"Father, my embroidery wool."

"Father, bring some scones with you."

And the father's voice called out from below:

"Yaia, fetch down my bag."

"Well, I never! he has forgotten his bag."

And there was a merry bustle from top to bottom of the house, a race among all those pretty faces creased with sleep, all those dishevelled locks of hair which they tidied on the way, until, bending over the baluster, half-a-dozen young girls sent their loud adieux to a little, old gentleman, neat and well-brushed, whose reddish face and lean silhouette at length vanished in the windings of the stairs. M. Joyeuse had gone to his office. Then this whole flight of birds dashed quickly up to the fourth floor, and, shutting the door, gathered at an open window to catch one more glimpse of their father. The little

man turned round, kisses were exchanged from afar, then the windows were closed.

From the Rue Saint-Ferdinand to Hemerlingue and Son's, his employers, M. Joyeuse had a walk of three-quarters of an hour. He walked, head erect and stiff, as if he was afraid to derange the beautiful bow of the cravat which his daughters had tied. A widower for some years, the good man lived only for his children, thought only of them, went through life environed by those little, blonde heads that fluttered confusedly around him as in a picture of the Assumption. All his wishes, all his projects had reference to "those young ladies," and constantly returned to them, sometimes after large circuits; for M. Joyeuse—it was due, no doubt, to his extremely short neck, his small stature, in which his boiling blood circulated in half-a-minute—was a man of fertile, astounding imagination. Ideas whirled in him with the speed of chaff round a winnowing fan. In the office the ciphers controlled his brain by their cold calculations; but outside the office his mind took its revenge on his inexorable occupation. The act of walking, his being accustomed to the road, whose slightest details he knew, allowed complete freedom to his imaginative faculties. He would then invent extraordinary adventures, which would make up for twenty *feuilletons*.

If, for instance, M. Joyeuse, as he went up the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, on the right-hand pavement—he always took the right—saw a heavy laundry-cart passing at a quick trot, driven by a country woman, whose child, sitting on a bundle of linen, bent a little forward:

"The child!" he would exclaim in terror, "take care! the child!"

His voice would be lost amid the noise of wheels, and his cry among the secrets of Providence. The cart passed on. He followed it with his eyes a moment, then walked on again; but the drama which had begun in his mind continued to unfold in it, with numberless incidents. The child had fallen. The wheels were about to pass over it. M. Joyeuse rushed out, and saved the poor little thing as it was near being killed; but the shaft hit him right in the chest and he fell, bathed in blood. He then saw himself carried to the chemist in the midst of the assembled crowd. He was put on a litter, carried up to his lodgings, then suddenly he heard the despairing shrieks of his daughters, his well-beloved ones, as they caught sight of him in that condition. And the cry of despair rang so loudly in his heart, he heard it so distinctly, so deeply: "Papa, my darling papa!" that he would utter it himself in the street, to the great astonishment of passers-by, with a hoarse voice that would wake him out of his fictitious nightmare.

This imagination, ever at full stretch, lent M. Joyeuse a singular look, feverish, ravaged—a contrast with his correct, inferior-official exterior. He lived so many passionate lives in one day!

Now, one morning when our "visionary" had left home at the usual time and under the usual conditions, he began, at the corner of the Rue Saint-Ferdinand, one of his little inward romances. The end of the year being near, it was perhaps a wooden shanty they were nailing together in the neighbouring yard that brought to his mind presents—New Year. And immediately the word "gratuity" was planted in his mind, like the first landmark in an amazing story. In the month of December all Hemerlingue's em-

ployees received double wages; and you know that, in small households, they base on these kinds of windfall innumerable ambitions or pleasant plans, making presents, renewing furniture, a small sum kept in a drawer for rainy weather.

The fact is, M. Joyeuse was not well-off. His wife, a Demoiselle de Saint-Amand, tormented with ideas of grandeur and Society, had "run" the accountant's little home on a ruinous footing, and although she had been dead three years, and Bonne Maman managed the house so cleverly, they had not yet been able to save, so burdensome had the past been. All at once, the good man conceived that this year the gratuity would be higher, owing to the increase of work in connection with the Tunisian loan. The loan was a very "good thing" for his employers, too good even, for M. Joyeuse had permitted himself to say in the office that this time "Hemerlingue & Son had sheared the Turk a little too close to the skin."

"Yes, certainly, the gratuity will be doubled," thought the visionary as he walked; and already he saw himself, a month later, climbing with his comrades the little staircase leading to Hemerlingue's room, for the New Year's call. Hemerlingue told them the good news; then he asked to see M. Joyeuse in private. And, lo and behold! his employer, usually so cold, enclosed in his yellow fat like a bale of raw silk, became affectionate, paternal, communicative. He wished to know how many daughters Joyeuse had.

"I have three—no, that is, four, Monsieur le Baron—I always muddle it. The eldest is such a sensible girl."

He asks what age they are?

"Aline is twenty, Monsieur le Baron. She is the eldest. Then we have Élise, who is preparing for her examination; she is eighteen. Henrietta is fourteen, and Zaza or Yaia is only twelve."

The nickname Yaia prodigiously amused M. le Baron, who inquired about the means of the interesting family.

"My salary, Monsieur le Baron — nothing else. I had put a little money aside, but my poor wife's illness, the education of my daughters——"

"What you earn is not enough, my dear Joyeuse. I raise it to a thousand francs a month."

"Oh! Monsieur le Baron, it is too much."

Although he had spoken the last sentence aloud, in the back of a policeman, who looked suspiciously at the little man gesticulating and lifting his head, the poor visionary did not awaken. He admired himself coming home, telling his daughters the news, taking them to the theatre in the evening to celebrate the happy day. Heavens! How pretty they were in front of the box, the Demoiselles Joyeuse, what a bunch of rosy faces! And then, next day, the two eldest were proposed to by—— It is impossible to know by whom, for M. Joyeuse had just found himself suddenly beneath the arch of the Hemerlingue buildings, in front of the double folding-doors, surmounted by the word "Cashier" in gilt letters.

"I shall always be the same," he said to himself, laughing a little, and passing his hand over his forehead, on which were beads of sweat.

Put in good humour by his chimæra, by the fires roaring along the row of parqueted offices, grated, discreet beneath the cold light of the ground-floor, where the gold pieces could be counted without

dazzling the eyes, M. Joyeuse cheerily greeted the other employees, and put on his working jacket and black velvet cap. Suddenly, there was a whistle from above; and the cashier, putting his ear to the tube, heard the coarse, gelatinous voice of Hemerlingue, the sole, the genuine Hemerlingue—the other, the son, was always away—asking for M. Joyeuse. What! Was the dream continuing? He felt quite excited, took the little inner staircase which he was just now ascending so jauntily, and found himself in the banker's private room, a narrow room, with a very high ceiling, furnished solely with green curtains and huge leather arm-chairs, proportioned to the terrific dimensions of the head of the firm. There he was, seated at his desk, which his corpulence prevented him from approaching, bulky, panting, and so yellow that his round, hook-nosed face, on the head of a fat, sick owl, cast, as it were, a light at the back of that solemn, darkened closet: a big Moorish merchant, mouldered away in the damp of his little court-yard. Under his eyelids, which he had difficulty in raising, his eyes gleamed one second when the accountant entered. He beckoned him to come near, and slowly, coldly, cutting up his phrases for want of breath, instead of "M. Joyeuse, how many daughters have you?" he said this:

"Joyeuse, you have taken the liberty of criticising in the office our last operations in connection with Tunis. Your words have been reported to me verbatim. And as I cannot permit them in the mouth of one of my employees, I give you notice that, from the end of the month, you will cease to belong to the firm."

A wave of blood rushed up to the accountant's

face, retreated, returned again, causing each time a confused hissing in his ears, a tumult of thoughts and images in his brain.

His daughters!

What would become of them?

Berths are so scarce at that time of the year.

He saw a picture of wretched poverty, and also the vision of an unfortunate man falling at Hemerlingue's feet, supplicating, threatening, leaping at his throat in a fit of desperate rage. All this agitation passed over his face like a gust of wind that wrinkles a lake, delving in it all manners of moving gulfs; but he remained dumb, standing where he was, and when his employer told him he could retire, he went down, staggering, to resume his task in the cashier's office.

That evening, on returning to Rue Saint-Ferdinand, M. Joyeuse said nothing to his daughters. He did not dare to. The idea of darkening that radiant gaiety of which the life of the home was composed, of bringing big tears to those pretty, light eyes, seemed to him intolerable. Moreover, he was fearful and weak, one of those who always say: "Let's wait till to-morrow." So, he waited before speaking, first of all till the end of the month of November, flattering himself with the vague hope that Hemerlingue would change his mind, as if he did not know that man's will, which resembled a flabby mollusc, holding fast to its ingot of gold. Then, when, his salary paid up, another accountant took his seat before the high desk where he had stood so long, he hoped he would quickly find something else and repair his misfortune before being obliged to confess it.

Every morning he pretended to go off to the office,

let himself be made presentable and be sent off as usual, his huge leather bag all ready for the numerous commissions of the evening. Although he intentionally forgot a few, because of the approaching end of the disastrous month, he had now plenty of time to execute them. He had his day to himself, a whole interminable day, which he spent in running all over Paris in search of a berth. He was given addresses, excellent recommendations. But in the terrible month of December, which is so cold and so short of light, burdened with expenses and anxieties, employees are much-enduring, and employers too. Everybody tries to end the year in calm, postponing to the month of January, that great leap of time a stage further, the changes, improvements, attempts at new life.

Wherever M. Joyeuse presented himself, he saw faces grow suddenly cold, as soon as he explained the purpose of his visit: "What! you are no more at Hemerlingue & Son's? How's that?" He explained the thing as best he could by a caprice of his employer, that ferocious Hemerlingue whom Paris knew; but he felt coldness, mistrust, in the uniform answer: "Come and see us again after New Year." And, timid as he was, he finally did not present himself anywhere, though he would pass twenty times before the same door, whose threshold he would never have crossed, but for the thought of his daughters. That alone pushed him by the shoulders, gave courage to his legs, despatched him on the same day to the opposite ends of Paris, to very vague addresses which his comrades would give him, to Aubervilliers, in a big factory of animal charcoal, where he had to call three days in succession without result.

Oh! the journeys in the rain, in the hoar-frost, the doors shut, the master who is gone out or engaged, the promises made and suddenly taken back, the expectations deceived, the enervation of long waiting, the humiliations in store for every man who asks for work, as if it were a shame to be without! M. Joyeuse knew all these sad facts, as well as the weariness, the discouragement of the most persevering will when ill-luck is constant. The terrible part of it was, that after those long, cruel days of inaction and fatigue, when M. Joyeuse came home, he had to play the comedy of a man returning from work, he had to relate the events of the day, the reports he had heard, the office tittle-tattle, with which he always used to entertain those young ladies.

They kept asking about Hemerlingue. Had father spoken to him? Was he in a good humour? You may imagine the torture of M. Joyeuse, obliged to invent incidents, anecdotes about the scoundrel who had so cruelly dismissed him after ten years' faithful service. Still, he played his little comedy in such a way that they were completely deceived. They had only remarked one thing, that, when father came home at night, he always sat down to table with a big appetite. I should think so! Since he had lost his place, he, poor man, no longer lunched.

Days passed on. M. Joyeuse found nothing. There was, indeed, an accountant's berth at the Caisse Territoriale, which he refused, being too well acquainted with banking operations, with all the ins-and-outs of financial Bohemia in general, and the Caisse Territoriale in particular, to set foot in that den.

"But," said Passajon, an employee of the Caisse, who, meeting him one day, and seeing him to be

without a berth, had proposed to him to visit Paganetti: "But I tell you it is as sound as a bell now. We have plenty of money. They pay; they have paid me; see what a 'toff' I am now."

And indeed the old man had a new livery, and, under his silver-buttoned tunic, his belly protruded majestically. Anyhow, M. Joyeuse was not to be tempted, even after Passajon, opening his blue eyes wide, had earnestly whispered in his ear these words full of promise:

"The Nabob is in the business."

Even after that, M. Joyeuse had had the courage to say no. Was it not better to die of hunger than to enter a bogus firm, whose books he might perhaps have one day to criticise before the tribunals?

He continued tramping around, therefore, but, discouraged, he no longer looked for a situation. As he had to stay out, he idled about by the shops on the quays, leant for hours on the parapets, watched the water flowing, and the unloading of the boats. When you have nothing to do, what way is there of spending life! On certain days, however, when M. Joyeuse was too fatigued, or the weather too bad, he would wait at the street-corner till his daughters had closed their windows, and, returning home by the side of the walls, he would dash quickly upstairs, hold his breath as he passed his door, and take refuge with the photographer, André Maranne, who, aware of his misfortune, gave him that compassionate welcome which poor people give one another.

Once, when Maranne was away, M. Joyeuse, who was keeping faithful guard over the studio and its new apparatus, heard the sound of two little knocks on the ceiling of the fourth floor, two separate knocks,

very distinct, then a patter like that of a mouse. The photographer's intimacy with his neighbours explained well enough these prisoner-like communications; but what did it mean? How answer what seemed like a call? He repeated the two knocks, at a venture —the slight drumming, and the conversation went no further. On André Maranne's return, the circumstance was explained. It was very simple; sometimes, during the day, these young ladies, who only saw their neighbour in the evening, would ask him for news, whether there was a little business. The signal given meant: "Is business good to-day?" And M. Joyeuse had replied, by instinct, without knowing: "Not so bad for the time of year." Although young Maranne grew very red as he explained matters, M. Joyeuse believed every word. But the idea of frequent communication between the two households frightened him as regards the secret of his situation, and thenceforth he abstained from what he called "his artistic days." Besides, the moment was coming nigh when he could no longer dissemble his distress; the end of the month was at hand, complicated by the fact that it was also the end of the year.

Paris was already putting on the festal appearance it wears in the last weeks of December. Usually M. Joyeuse formed part of that busy crowd which moves about with a noise of money in the pockets and packets in every hand. He would go together with Bonne Maman in search of presents for the young ladies, stopped before those little traders who get excited at the smallest customer, who are not accustomed to selling, and have based plans of marvellous profits on their business during the few days of

December. And there were conversations, calculations, an endless embarrassment of choice in that little, complex brain, which was always ahead of the present minute and the occupation of the moment.

This year, alas! there was nothing of the sort. He wandered mournfully through the gay town, feeling sadder, more out-of-work, at the sight of the surrounding activity, hustled, elbowed, as are all those who disturb the movement of the active ones, his heart beating in perpetual fear, for Bonne Maman had for some days been making, at table, obvious and significant allusions to presents. So he avoided being left alone with her, and had forbidden her to come and fetch him as he left the office. But, despite all his efforts, the moment was approaching, he knew it well, when mystery would be impossible, and his burdensome secret would be revealed. Was she very terrible, this Bonne Maman, whom M. Joyeuse feared so much? My goodness, no. A little severe, that's all, with a pretty smile that immediately pardoned all culprits. But M. Joyeuse was fearful, timid, by birth: and twenty years' living together with an imperious woman, "a scion of the nobility," had enslaved him for ever, like those convicts who, after their term of imprisonment, have further to undergo a period of police supervision. And, in his case, it was for life.

One evening, the Joyeuse family were assembled in the little drawing-room, the last wreckage of its splendour, in which there were two padded armchairs, many antimacassars, a piano, two oil-lamps with small green shades, and a whatnot full of bibelots.

The true home is among humble families.

For economy's sake, only one fire is lit for the

whole house, and one lamp, around which the girls are all working or amusing themselves—a fine, big family lamp, whose antique shade, painted with night scenes, sewn with glittering spots, has been the astonishment and delight of them all in their early childhood. They sew, they read, they chat a bit. A flash from the lamp, a crackling from the fire, is the only thing audible, except, now and then, an exclamation from M. Joyeuse, who is a little outside his little circle, lost in the shadow where he sheltered his anxious brow and all the hallucinations of his mind. Now he fancies that, in the distress in which he finds himself overwhelmed, in that absolute necessity of confessing everything to his children, this evening, at the latest, to-morrow, unexpected help arrives. Hemerlingue, seized with remorse, sends him, as he has to all who have worked at the Tunisian loan, his December gratuity. A tall lacquey brings it: "From M. le Baron." The visionary utters the words aloud. The pretty faces turn towards him; there is a laugh, a stir, and the unhappy man wakes up with a start.

Oh! how angry he now is with himself for his delay in confessing everything, for that fallacious security maintained around him, and which he will have to destroy all of a sudden. Besides, what need had he to criticise the Tunisian loan! He even reproaches himself now for not having accepted a berth in the Caisse Territoriale. Had he the right to refuse? Oh! what a wretched father of a family, powerless to keep or defend the happiness of his children! And, at the sight of the pretty group encircled by the lamp-shade, whose peaceful aspect forms so great a contrast to his own inward agitation, he is seized with a remorse so violent for his weak soul that his secret

comes to his lips, is about to escape in an outburst of sobbing, when a ring of the bell—not imaginary this time—startles them all and stops him as he is about to speak.

Who could come at this hour? They had lived alone since the mother's death, hardly visited anyone. André Maranne, when he came down to spend a few minutes with them, would knock familiarly, as do those for whom a door is always open. Deep silence in the drawing room, a long conversation on the landing. At last, the old servant—she had been in the house as long as the lamp—introduced a young man, quite a stranger, who stopped, wonder struck, before the sweet picture of the four lovely girls gathered round the table. As he entered, therefore, he was nervous, a little awkward. Still, he explained very clearly the aim of his visit. He had been sent to M. Joyeuse by an acquaintance of his, old Passajon, to take lessons in book-keeping. One of his friends was engaged in large money transactions, in loans of some magnitude. He wanted to help him by checking the employment of the capital, by probing into the honesty of the operations; but he was a barrister, with small knowledge of systems of finance, of banking language. Could not M. Joyeuse, in a few months, with three or four lessons a week——

"But certainly, sir, certainly," stammered the father, quite stunned by this unexpected luck. "I undertake, in a few months, to make you capable of verifying accounts. Where shall we take our lessons?"

"Here, if you will allow it," said the young man, "for I don't want anyone to know that I am working. Only, I should be sorry if, whenever I come, I put everybody to flight, like this evening."

Indeed, at the visitor's first words, the four curly heads had vanished, with little whisperings and rustlings of skirts; and the drawing-room appeared very bare, now that the great circle of white light was empty.

M. Joyeuse, who always easily took offence where his daughters were concerned, replied that "Those young ladies were in the habit of retiring early every evening:" and that in a low, brief tone, which clearly meant, "Let us talk about our lessons, young man, please." So, the days and the free hours in the evening were agreed upon.

As for terms, that would be left to Monsieur.

Monsieur named a sum.

The accountant grew quite red; it was what he used to get at Hemerlingue's.

"Oh, no! that's too much."

But the other was not listening: he hummed and hawed, twisted his tongue about, as if he had something very hard to pronounce, and suddenly said with resolution:

"Here is your first month——"

"But, Monsieur——"

The young man insisted. He was not known to him. It was fair he should pay in advance—Passajon had evidently informed him—M. Joyeuse understood, and said in a low voice: "Thank you! Thank you!" —so deeply moved that words failed him. A livelihood, it was a livelihood for a few months: time to look about, to find another place. His darlings would not lack anything. They would have their presents. O Providence!

"Then, Wednesday, Monsieur Joyeuse."

"Wednesday, Monsieur——?"

"De Géry—Paul de Géry."

And they parted, both of them delighted, dazzled, the one by the appearance of an unexpected saviour, the other by the lovely picture, which he had only half seen, all those young girls gathered round the table, covered with books, exercise-books, and skeins, with an expression of purity, of industrious honesty. De Géry saw there quite a new Paris—courageous, homely, very different from that which he already knew —a Paris of which neither the writers of *feuilletons* nor the reporters ever speak, which reminded him of his province, with an additional refinement, the charm which conflict and tumult lend the peaceful refuge that is free from them.

CHAPTER V

Felicia Ruys

"And your son, Jenkins, what have you done with him? Why don't we see him any more at your house? He was a nice boy."

As she spoke in the tone of contemptuous abruptness, almost habitual with her when she addressed the Irishman, Felicia was working at the Nabob's bust which she had just begun. She posed her model, took up and put down the boaster, gently wiped her fingers on the little sponge, whilst the light and the calm of a beautiful Sunday afternoon fell on the glass rotunda of the studio. Felicia "was at home" every Sunday, if you could call an "at home" leaving her door open, letting people come in and go out, sit down a moment, without budging from her work on their account or even interrupting the discussion begun, in order to welcome new arrivals. There were artists, with clever heads and shining beards, with here and there the white locks of one of the old romantic friends of Ruys *père*; then there were amateurs, society men, bankers, stock-brokers, and a few young dandies, who had come rather for the beautiful girl than for the sculpture, so as to have the right to say at the club in the evening: "I was with Felicia to-day."

Among them, Paul de Géry, silent, wrapt in an admiration that entered his heart a little deeper every day, tried to understand the beautiful sphinx enveloped in purple cashmere and unbleached guipure lace, who was sturdily cutting away at the clay, a burnisher's apron—coming nearly up to her neck—allowing the small proud head to emerge with those transparent tones, those gleams of veiled rays with which the mind, with which inspiration fugitively colours faces. Paul still remembered what had been said about her in his presence, tried to form an opinion for himself, was doubtful, troubled, fascinated, swearing every time he would not come again, and not missing a single Sunday.

There was also there, as a part of the house, always in the same place, a little woman with grey, powdered hair, a cap round her rosy face, a pastel slightly faded with the years, who, in the subdued light of an embrasure, smiled gently, her hands spread on her knees, motionless as a fakir.

Jenkins, friendly, frank of face, with his black eyes and apostolic expression, went from one person to another, liked and known by everybody. He too never missed one of Felicia's "at homes": and truely he exercised his patience, all the rebuffs of the pretty women and artist being reserved for him alone. Without seeming to notice it, showing the same smiling, indulgent serenity, he continued visiting the daughter of his old friend Ruys, whom he had so much loved, so carefully tended up to the last minute.

This time, however, the question Felicia had just addressed to him, *à propos* of his son, seemed extremely disagreeable to him; and he replied with his brows contracted, and a real expression of bad temper:

"What's become of him, indeed? I know no more than you. He has left us for good. He felt out of his element at our house. He only loves his Bohemia——"

Felicia bounded up in a way that startled everyone, and cried out, her eyes flashing, her nostrils quivering:

"That's too much. Come, Jenkins, what do you call Bohemia? A charming word, by-the-by, which should conjure up ideas of long, erratic wanderings in the sun, halts in the corner of a wood, all the fairest fruits and fountains enjoyed as the chances of the high-ways presented them. But, since you have turned all that grace of life into an insult, a stain, to whom do you apply it? To some poor devils with long hair, in love with independence in rags, who starve in an attic, gazing at the blue of heaven too close at hand, or seeking rhymes beneath tiles through which the rain filters: to those madmen, now more and more rare, who, from horror at the conventional, the traditional, the stupidity of life, have leapt over the borders of Bohemia? But, come, that is ancient history. It is Murger's Bohemia, with the hospital at the end, terror of children, comfort of parents, Red Riding-Hood eaten by the wolf. That fairy-tale is dead and gone sometime now. To-day, you know well that artists are the most orderly people on earth, that they earn money, pay their debts, and contrive to resemble the man in the street. Still, the true Bohemians are not lacking; our Society is composed of them, only it is especially in your world that they are to be found. Great Heavens! They don't carry a label outside, and nobody mistrusts them; but, as regards the uncertainty, the inconsequence of life, they have nothing to envy in those they so disdainfully

name "irregular." Ah! if people knew all the turpitudes, the fantastic or monstrous stories, which a black coat, the most correct of your frightful modern costumes, may hide. Look here, Jenkins, the other night at your house I amused myself by counting them, all those adventurers of high——"

The little old pink and powdered woman said gently to her from her seat:

"Felicia, take care."

But she went on without listening:

"Who is Monpavon, doctor? And Bois-Landry? And De Mora himself? And——"

She was going to say: And the Nabob? but she restrained herself.

"And how many others? Oh, really! You do well to speak contemptuously of Bohemia. But your *clientèle*, as a fashionable doctor, O sublime Jenkins, is composed solely of Bohemia. Bohemia of industry, of finance, of politics; the degraded and tarnished reputations of all the castes, and the higher you go the more there are, because rank gives impunity, and fortune pays well for silence."

She spoke very animatedly, with a hard expression, her lips curled in savage scorn. Jenkins laughed a false laugh, assumed a slightly bantering, condescending tone: "Ah! silly creature! silly creature!" And his eyes turned restlessly and imploringly in the Nabob's direction, as if to beg his pardon for all such paradoxical impertinences.

Jansoulet, however, far from seeming annoyed, he who was so proud of posing to the beautiful artist, so enchanted at the honour she did him, nodded his head approvingly:

"She is right, Jenkins," he said at length; "she is

right. It is we who are the true Bohemia. Look at me, for instance, look at Hemerlingue, two of the biggest financiers in Paris. When I think whence we came, all the trades we have tried our hands at. Hemerlingue, a former sutler of a regimental canteen; I, who, for a livelihood, carried sacks of wheat in the Harbour of Marseilles. And the flukes by which our fortune was made, as all fortunes are made nowadays, as a matter of fact—Great Scot! Go to the colonnade of the Stock Exchange from three to five —— But forgive me, Mademoiselle, with my mania for gesticulating when I speak, I have lost the pose—let's see, like this?"

"It's no use," said Felicia, throwing down her boaster with the gesture of a spoilt child. "I shan't do any more to-day."

She was a strange girl, that Felicia. A true artist's daughter, a talented, unmethodical artist, a thorough follower of the romantic school, such as was Sébastien Ruys. She had never known her mother, being born of one of those fugitive loves, which suddenly used to enter the sculptor's bachelor life, like swallows into a house whose door is always open, and which speedily used to disappear again because they could not build a nest there.

That time, the lady, as she took flight, had left the great artist, then about forty years old, a beautiful child, whom he had recognised as his own, and had brought up, and who became the joy and passion of his life. Till thirteen, Felicia had remained with her father, sounding a tender child's note in that studio, encumbered with loungers, models, great grey-hounds, all lying at full length on the ottomans. There was a corner kept for her, for essays in sculpture, quite a

microscopic outfit, a tripod, some wax; and old Ruys would call out to those who came in:

"Don't go there. Don't disturb anything. It's the 'kid's' corner."

And so, at ten, she could hardly read, and used the boaster with wonderful skill. Ruys would have liked to have always near him this child who did not disturb at all, who had entered so early into the great artistic brotherhood. But it was sad to see the tiny girl amid the free-and-easy habitués of the house, the eternal coming and going of models, the discussions about an art, which is, as it were, entirely physical, and even sitting at the noisy Sunday dinners among five or six women whom her father addressed familiarly —comedians, dancers or singers, who, after dinner, started smoking, their elbows on the table-cloth, wallowing in those "smutty" stories which were so much relished by the master of the house. Happily, childhood is guarded by a mail of candour, an enamel off which all impurities slip away. Felicia became noisy, headstrong, ill-mannered, but without being soiled by all the dirt that passed over her little soul.

Every year, during the fine season, she used to go and stay for a few days with her godmother, Constance Crenmitz, the elder Crenmitz, whom the whole of Europe had so long called "the famous dancer," and who lived in peaceful retirement at Fontainebleau.

The arrival of the "little demon" brought into the old dancer's life an agitation from which it took her the rest of the year to recover. The frights the child gave her, with her recklessness in climbing, jumping, riding, all the impetuousness of her unrestrained nature, made the visits at once delicious and alarming;

delicious, because she worshipped Felicia, the only family bond remaining to that poor, old, retired salamander, after thirty years of dancing amid flaring gaslight; alarming, because the demon ruthlessly poked her nose into all the corners of the dancer's house, which was as beautifully decorated, tended, perfumed, as her opera box, and provided with a museum of souvenirs dating from all the stages in the world.

Constance Crenmitz was the only feminine element in Felicia's childhood. Dull of wit, narrow-minded, her mind dyed for life by the pink of her tights, she had, it is true, a coquettish habit of neatness, and her agile fingers could sew, embroider, adjust, leaving their light, careful trace in all the corners of a room. She alone undertook to bring up the young savage, and to awake discreetly the woman in the strange being on whose back the cloaks, the furs, all the elegant inventions of fashion, fell into folds that were too straight or into abrupt singularities.

It was also the dancer—she must have been badly neglected, that little Ruys—who, overcoming paternal selfishness, insisted on a necessary separation from her father, when Felicia was twelve or thirteen; and she further took upon herself the responsibility of finding a suitable boarding-school, a school she purposely selected of a very substantial, bourgeois type, right over an airy faubourg, established in a large, old-fashioned dwelling, surrounded by big walls, big trees —a sort of convent, minus the restraint and the contempt for serious study.

Far from it: there was a good deal of work done in Madame Belin's school; they did not go out except at the great fêtes, and did not communicate with the

outside world except when their relations visited them, on Thursdays, in a small garden planted with shrubs, or in the immense parlour with the sculptured, gilded door-tops. Felicia's entry into the almost monastic house caused at first some stir; her toilette, chosen by the Austrian dancer, her hair which fell in curls to her waist, her easy, boyish movements, aroused some ill-feeling, but she was a Parisian, and could quickly assimilate herself to every situation, every place. After a few days, she wore more gracefully than any of the others the small black apron, to which the most coquettish of them fastened their watches, the straight skirt—a severe and harsh regulation at that time, when fashion inflated women with a multiplicity of flounces—the uniform head-dress, two plaits tied rather low in the neck, in the manner of Roman peasants.

Strange to say, the constant work of the classes, their quiet punctuality, suited Felicia's nature—that altogether intelligent, alert nature in which the taste for study was enlivened by a pleasing juvenile expansiveness in the noisy good-humour of recreation. She was popular among the daughters of big manufacturers, Parisian notaries, or gentlemen farmers; a solid little world, rather stiff. Old Ruys's well-known name, the respect with which Paris regards an artistic reputation, gave Felicia a unique and very enviable position, which was made still more brilliant by her success in the classes, by a genuine talent for drawing, and by her beauty—that superiority which imposes even on every young girl.

In the purified atmosphere of the boarding-school she felt an extreme delight in feminising herself, in resuming her sex, in learning order, regularity, other than that of the lovable dancer, whose kisses always

retained a taste of rouge, and whose outbursts of affection were so effusive as to be hardly natural. Old Ruys was in ecstasies, whenever he went to see his daughter, to find her more lady-like, knowing how to walk, enter or go out of a room with that pretty bow which made all Madame Belin's pupils long for the trailing rustle of a long dress.

At first he came often, then as time failed him for all the work he had accepted and undertaken, the advances for which paid for the waste, the extravagances of his life, he was less often seen in the parlour. At last he was struck down by illness. Overcome by an unconquerable anæmia, he remained for weeks without going out, without working. So he wanted to see his daughter again; and Felicia returned from the school, which sheltered her with such wholesome quiet, into her father's studio, which was still frequented by the same boon companions—the parasites that stick around all celebrities—and among them illness had introduced a new individual, Doctor Jenkins.

The handsome, frank face, the open, serene air, that was expressed in the person of the doctor, who was already well known, who talked of his art with so much offhandness and yet worked miraculous cures, the care with which he tended her father, greatly impressed the young girl. Jenkins at once became her friend, confidant, a watchful, gentle guardian. Sometimes in the studio when somebody—her father above all—made too broad a remark, a risky joke, the Irishman knitted his brows, clicked his tongue, or diverted Felicia's attention. He often took her to spend the day with Madame Jenkins, trying to prevent her from becoming again the savage she was before she went to school, or even something worse, that threatened her in the

moral laxity, which is sadder than any other, in which she was left.

But the young girl had something to protect her yet better than the irreproachable and worldly example of handsome Madame Jenkins: the art she adored, the objective enthusiasm with which it inspired her nature, the sentiment of beauty, of truth, which passed from her reflective, fertile brain into her fingers with a slight quiver of the nerves, a desire for the thing created, for the image realised. She worked the whole day at her sculpture, concentrated her dreams with that happiness of youthful instinct that lends so much charm to first works.

Ruys was proud of that talent which grew up by his side. He became weaker every day, and was already in that phase in which an artist repeats things, but he followed Felicia as a consolation for the ending of his own career. They loved one another with the presentiment, and gradually the cruel certainty, of an approaching separation. All at once a horrible incident took place in Felicia's life. Jenkins had one day taken her off to dine with him, as often happened. Madame Jenkins was absent, on a two days' journey with her son; but the doctor's age, his quasi-paternal intimacy allowed him, even in his wife's absence, to invite the young girl, whom her fifteen years, the fifteen years of an Oriental Jewess, resplendent in her precocious beauty, still left in a state of childhood.

The dinner was very merry, Jenkins all politeness, cordial as was his wont. They presently went into the doctor's closet; and suddenly, as they sat on the divan, in the middle of an intimate, quite friendly talk about her father, his health, their work, Felicia felt, as it were, the chill of an abyss between her and the

man, then the brutal embrace of a fawn's arm. She gazed upon a Jenkins she did not know, who was dazed, stammering, forcing a laugh. In the surprise, the unexpectedness of such a brutal attack, anybody but Felicia, I mean a girl who was genuinely innocent for her age, would have been lost. What saved the poor girl was her knowledge. She had heard so many tales at her father's table! And, besides, art, the life of a studio. She was not an ingénue. She at once understood what his embrace meant, struggled, jumped, then, not being strong enough to get free, she cried out. He was afraid, let go, and suddenly she found herself standing up, free, with the man on his knees weeping, begging forgiveness. He had yielded to a moment of madness. She was so beautiful, he loved her so. For months he had struggled. But now it was all over, never again, oh! never again. Would not even touch the hem of her dress. She did not answer, trembled, put her hair in order, and tidied her dress, not knowing what she was about. Go away, she must go away instantly, quite alone. He sent a servant to accompany her; and, in a low voice, as she got into the carriage: "Above all, not a word. It would kill your father."

He knew her so well, he was so sure of closing her mouth with that suggestion, the scoundrel, that he called next day as if nothing had happened, gushing as usual, with a loyal expression on his face. As a fact, she never spoke of it to her father, or to anybody else. But, from that day, a change took place in her, a kind of unbending from her proud ways. She had caprices, wearinesses, a shade of disgust in her smile, and sometimes sudden fits of anger against her father, a look of scorn that blamed

him for not having been able to keep better guard over her.

"What's the matter with her?" old Ruys would say; and Jenkins, with a doctor's authority, would put it down to her age and some physical disturbance. He avoided speaking to the young girl, reckoning on time to efface the sinister impression, and not hopeless of success, for he was smitten with the mad love of a man of forty-seven, with the incurable passion of maturity; and that was the hypocrite's punishment. His daughter's singular condition was a real source of distress to the sculptor; but it did not last long. Ruys suddenly passed away, crumbled all at once, like all Jenkins' patients. His last words were:

"Jenkins, I entrust my daughter to you."

The words were so ironically mournful that Jenkins, who was present at the death agony, could not help paling.

Felicia was even more stunned than grieved. The feeling of a vast desert, engirt by night and by dangers, was added to the stupefaction at death, which she had never seen and which had been revealed to her amid many marks of affection. Some of the sculptor's friends formed themselves into a kind of family council to discuss the fate of the friendless, destitute child. They had found fifty francs in a tray in which Sébastien used to empty his pocket-money in the studio, on a piece of furniture well known to those in need of it, and which they visited without a scruple. No other inheritance, at any rate in the way of money; but there were most sumptuous objects of art and curios, some valuable pictures, and some I.O.U.'s that scarcely covered the innumerable debts. They spoke about organising a sale. Felicia, being consulted, re-

plied that it did not matter to her if they sold everything, but, for God's sake, let them leave her alone.

However, the sale did not take place, thanks to her godmother, the worthy Crenmitz, who suddenly appeared, tranquil and gentle as usual:

"Don't listen to them, my dear; don't sell anything. Your old Constance has an income of fifteen thousand francs which were destined for you. You will enjoy it now, that's all. We shall live here together. You will see I shall not be in the way. You will go on with your sculpture, I will manage the house. What do you say?"

It was said so tenderly, in the childlike accent of a foreigner expressing herself in French, that the young girl was deeply moved. Her petrified heart opened, a hot flood streamed from her eyes, and she rushed up, buried herself in the ex-dancer's arms: "Oh, godmother! how good you are. . . . Yes, yes, don't leave me be always with me. . . . Life frightens and disgusts me. . . . I see in it so much hypocrisy, lying!" And the old woman, having arranged herself a silky, embroidered nest in that house, which resembled an encampment of travellers laden with riches from all countries, the two, so different in nature, began life together.

It was no small sacrifice Constance had made to the darling demon, when she left her Fontainebleau retreat for Paris, which terrified her. Moreover, the responsibility of managing Felicia's house was serious because of old Ruys' extravagance, which had been inherited by his daughter, both of them artists who disdained to save. She had also other difficulties to overcome. The studio was unendurable to her, with its permanent tobacco smoke, the cloud impenetrable

to her, in which discussions about art, the undressing of ideas were blended in brilliant, vague whirls, that inevitably gave her the megrim.

The unforeseen, capriciousness, ignorance of the most trivial things used to occasion exceeding disorder in the finances of the household, from which sometimes they only escaped by dint of privations, dismissals of servants, reforms, which were ridiculous in their exaggeration. During one of these crises, Jenkins had made veiled, delicate offers of assistance, which were rejected by Felicia with scorn.

"You didn't do right," said Constance to her, "to be so rude to the poor doctor. There was, after all, nothing offensive in his offer. An old friend of your father."

"He! a friend of anybody. The miserable Tartuffe!"

And Felicia, restraining herself with difficulty, turned her wrath into irony, imitated Jenkins, his wavy gestures, his hand on his heart, then, puffing her cheeks, she said in a thick, muffled voice, full of lying effusiveness:

"Let us be humane, let us be kindly. Do good without expectations! Everything is in that."

Constance laughed in spite of herself till she cried, so true to life was the mimicry.

"All the same, you are too hard. You will end by keeping him away."

"Really!" said a lifting of the young girl's head.

And, indeed, he came as usual, gentle, courteous, dissembling his passion, which was only visible when he became jealous of newcomers heaping attentions on the ex-dancer who, in spite of everything, was pleased by his gentleness, and who recognised in him

a man of her own period, a period when, on approaching women, you kissed their hand, with a compliment on their good health and good looks

One morning, Jenkins, who had called during his round, found Constance sitting by herself in the anteroom, unoccupied.

"You see, doctor, I am on guard," she said quietly.

"How's that?"

"Why, Felicia is working. She does not wish to be disturbed, and servants are so stupid. So I am keeping guard myself."

Then, seeing the Irishman move a step towards the studio:

"No, no, don't go. She warned me not to let anybody go in."

"But I?"

"Please don't. I should be scolded."

Jenkins was about to go, when an outburst of laughter from Felicia, passing through the hangings, made him lift his head.

"So she isn't by herself?"

"No, the Nabob is with her. They are having a sitting for the portrait."

"And why this mystery? It's singular——"

He walked up and down with a furious air, but controlled himself.

Finally he burst out:

It was most incredibly improper to let a young girl shut herself up like that with a man.

He was amazed that so serious, so loving a friend as Constance—— It looked as if——

The old lady gazed at him, stupefied. As if Felicia was a young girl like others! And then, what danger was there with the Nabob, so grave, so plain a man?

Besides, Jenkins ought to know well that Felicia never consulted anybody, that she acted as she herself pleased.

"No, no, it's impossible; I can't stand that," said the Irishman.

And, without bothering any more about the dancer, who raised her hands to Heaven to call it to witness what was about to happen, he went towards the studio; but, instead of entering straight away, he softly half-opened the door, and raised a corner of the tapestry through which he could see a portion of the room, that in which the Nabob was actually posing, although rather far off.

Jansoulet, seated, without his cravat, his waistcoat open, was talking with an agitated air, in a low voice. Felicia answered in the same tone, in laughing whispers. The sitting was very lively. Then a silence, a rustle of skirts, and the artist, approaching her model, turned right down, with a familiar movement, his linen collar, running her light hand over his tanned skin.

That Ethiopian mask, whose muscles were quivering in an intoxication of well-being, with the big eyelashes lowered like an animal that gets drowsy when it is stroked, the bold outline of the young girl bending over that strange face in order to verify its proportions, then a violent, uncontrollable movement of the Nabob, as he caught hold of the delicate hand as it passed, and laid his two thick, enamoured lips on it, Jenkins saw it all in a red flash.

The noise he made on entering forced the two back into their respective positions, and, in the bright daylight that dazzled the eyes of this vigilant cat of a man, he saw the young girl standing before him, stupefied with rage. "Who is there? What do you mean?"

and the Nabob sat there, his collar turned down, petrified, monumental.

Jenkins, rather abashed, frightened at his own audacity, stammered some excuses. He had a very urgent matter to mention to M. Jansoulet, a very important bit of news, which would not brook any delay. . . . "He knew from an unimpeachable source that there would be an award of Crosses on 16th March." The Nabob's face, which was for a moment lowering, immediately expanded.

"Oh, really?"

He stopped posing. The thing was worth the trouble, by God! M. de la Perrière, one of the Empress's private secretaries, had been commanded by her to visit the Bethlehem Refuge. Jenkins had come in search of the Nabob, to take him to the Tuileries to the secretary, and fix a day for the visit. This visit to Bethlehem meant a Cross for him.

"Quick, let's be off: my dear doctor, I shall be with you in a moment."

He was no longer cross with Jenkins for having disturbed him, and he feverishly tied his cravat again, forgetting in his new emotion how upset he was just now, for ambition held the first place with him.

Whilst the two men were talking in a half-whisper, Felicia, standing motionless before them, her nostrils quivering, her lip curling with scorn, was looking at them, as who should say: "Well! I am waiting."

Jansoulet apologised for being obliged to interrupt the sitting; but a visit of the highest importance——

She smiled pityingly:

"Very good, very good. We have reached a point where I can work without you."

"Oh! yes," said the doctor. "The work is almost finished."

He added with the air of a connoisseur:

"It's a fine piece of work."

And, reckoning on this compliment to cover his exit, he was making off, with lowered shoulders; but Felicia stopped him violently:

"Stop, you—I want a word with you."

He saw clearly by her look that he had to give in, if he wished to escape an outburst:

"Will you excuse me, dear friend? Mademoiselle has something to tell me. My brougham is at the door. Get in, I will follow you."

When the studio was closed upon that heavy, retreating step, they looked one another in the face.

"You must be drunk or mad to permit yourself such a liberty? What! you dare to come in, when I am not 'at home'? Why such an outrage? What right have you——?"

"The right that a desperate and unconquerable passion gives."

"Stop, Jenkins, you are saying what I don't wish to hear. I allow you to come here out of pity, from habit, because my father loved you. But never mention to me again your—love"—she said the word very low, as if ashamed—"or you will not see me again; yes, even were I to die in getting rid of you once and for all."

A child caught in mischief does not bend his head more humbly than Jenkins, as he answered:

"True—I was wrong—a moment of insanity, of blindness. But why do you amuse yourself by breaking my heart as you do?"

"Do you imagine I even think about you?"

"Whether you think of me or not, I am there. I see what is going on, and your coquetry causes me terrible pain."

Her cheeks reddened slightly at the reproach:

"Coquette, I? and with whom?"

"With that!" rejoined the Irishman, pointing to the monkey-like and superb bust.

She tried to laugh.

"The Nabob—what silliness!"

"Don't tell an untruth. Do you believe I am blind, that I do not notice all your tricks? You stay alone with him a very long time. I was there just now. I saw you." He lowered his voice, as if breath had failed him. "What are you looking for, you strange, cruel child? I have seen you rebuff the most handsome, the most noble, the greatest men. That little De Géry devours you with his eyes, you pay no heed to him. The Duke de Mora himself has not been able to touch your heart. And that man there, who is ugly, vulgar, who was not thinking of you, who has everything but love in his head—you saw how he went out! What are you aiming at? What do you expect from him?"

"I want—I want him to marry me. There!"

Coldly, in a softened tone, as if the confession had lowered her to him whom she so much despised, she laid bare her motives. The life she was leading was driving her into a blind alley. She had luxurious, expensive tastes, disorderly habits which nothing could conquer, and which would inevitably land her in wretched poverty, herself and the good Crenmitz, who let herself be ruined without uttering a word. In three years, four years at the most, it would be all up.

And then make-shifts, debts, rags, and the hardupness of small artists' households. Or, on the other hand, the lover, the protector, that is, slavery and infamy.

"Come now," said Jenkins. "And I? am I not here?"

"Anything rather than you," she replied, drawing herself up. "No, what I want, what I desire, is a husband to protect me from others and from myself, who keeps me from a heap of dark things which frighten me when I am bored, gulfs into which I feel I might plunge, somebody to love me whilst I work, and to relieve my poor old fairy who is at the end of her tether. That man suits me, and I thought of him as soon as I saw him. He is ugly, but he has a kindly look; besides, he is absurdly wealthy, and to handle such a colossal fortune must give pleasure. Oh! I know. There is probably some blemish in his life that brought him luck. All that gold cannot have been honestly come by. But there! the truth, Jenkins! with your hand on that heart to which you so often appeal, do you think I am a very tempting spouse for an honourable man? Look: of all those young men who ask leave to come here as if it were a gracious favour, which one has dreamt of proposing to me? Never a single one. De Géry no more than the rest. I allure, but I frighten. That's understood. What can be conceived about a young woman brought up as I have been, without a mother, without a family, thrown together with my father's models and mistresses? — What mistresses, my God! And Jenkins as sole guardian. Oh! when I think—when I think——"

And things sprang up from her memory of the past that increased her anger; "Yes, by Heaven! I am

an adventuress, and that adventurer is precisely the husband to suit me."

"You will have, at any rate, to wait till he is a widower," calmly replied Jenkins. "And, in that case, there is a chance of you waiting a long time yet, for his Levantine looks healthy."

Felicia Ruys turned ghastly pale.

"He's married?"

"Married, certainly, and the father of a whole herd of children. The whole *smala* arrived two days ago."

She was, for a moment, thunderstruck, gazing at vacancy, a shudder in her cheeks.

Opposite her, the Nabob's broad mask, with his flat nose, his sensual, good-natured mouth, cried aloud with life and truth in the gleams of clay. She contemplated it a second, then stepped forward, and with a gesture of disgust, knocked over the high wooden stand with the shining greasy block, which was crushed on the ground into a heap of mud.

CHAPTER VI

JANSOULET AT HOME

HE had been married twelve years, but had not spoken of it to any of his Parisian *entourage*, from an Oriental habit—that silence which Orientals maintain as regards their women. Suddenly they heard that Madame was coming, that apartments had to be prepared for her, her children, and her women. The Nabob leased the whole second floor of the house in the Place Vendôme, whose tenant was evicted at Nabobian prices. The stables, too, were widened, the staff was doubled; then, one day, coachmen and carriages went to the Lyons Station to fetch Madame, who arrived by a special train from Marseilles, full of gazelles, negresses, and little niggers.

She arrived in a state of terrible exhaustion, knocked up, dazed by her long journey by rail, the first in her life, for she had been brought to Tunis in early infancy, and had never left it since. Two negroes carried her from her carriage to her apartments in an armchair, which afterwards always remained beneath the porch below, ready for these arduous removals. Madame Jansoulet could not go upstairs: it made her giddy: she would not have anything to do with lifts, which creaked under her weight; besides, she never walked.

Huge, so bulky that it was impossible to tell her age between twenty-five and forty, a rather pretty face, but with all the features deformed, dull eyes under falling eyelids striated like shells, got up in gaudy, export dresses, loaded with diamonds and jewels like a Hindoo idol, she was the finest pattern of those transplanted European women called Levantines.

She was the daughter of an immensely wealthy Belgian, who was in the Tunisian coral trade, by whom Jansoulet, on arriving in the country, had been employed for some months. Mademoiselle Afchin, then a delicious doll of ten, dazzling in complexion, hair and health, often came to her father's office in the big carriage, drawn by mules, which brought them to their beautiful villa of La Marse, in the suburbs of Tunis. This sprightly girl, always *décolletée*, with shining shoulders, had dazzled the adventurer, who sometimes caught sight of her in her luxurious environment; and, years after, when, as a rich man and the favourite of the Bey, he thought of settling down, it was of her he thought. The child had changed into a big girl, heavy and white. Her understanding, never bright, had become yet duller through the torpor of a dormouse existence, the neglect of a father devoted entirely to business, the use of tobacco saturated with opium and rose essences, the stolidity of her Flemish blood, complicated by Oriental indolence; for the rest, badly brought up, gluttonous, sensual, arrogant, she was a perfected Levantine plaything.

But Jansoulet did not see it.

For him she was, she always remained, up to her arrival in Paris, a person of the very highest society, a Demoiselle Afchin; he spoke to her respectfully, was

rather humble and timid in his attitude to her, gave her money without counting, gratified her most expensive whims, her maddest caprices, all the fantasies of a Levantine brain disturbed by boredom and idleness.

Under the sky of Paris and its cold light disillusion began. The Nabob, who had made up his mind to set up his abode there, to give "At Homes" and parties, had sent for his wife to act as head of the house; but when he saw that exhibition of loud dresses, Palais-Royal jewellery, and all the bizarre apparatus that followed, he had a vague impression of a Queen Pomaré in exile. He had now seen real Society women, and he made comparisons. After having planned a great ball in honour of her arrival, he prudently countermanded it. Besides, Madame Jansoulet did not want to see anyone. Her natural laziness was increased by the home-sickness, which was caused by the cold, yellow fog and the dripping rain she encountered as soon as she arrived. The Irish doctor, with his fatherly manners, his fine high-falutin', had no success with her. The Levantine did not want at any price the arsenic pills for toning herself up. The Nabob was in consternation. What should he do? Send her back to Tunis with the children? It was hardly possible. He was in decided disgrace there.

The Hemerlingues were triumphing. One last affront had filled the cup to overflowing: on Jansoulet's departure, they had commissioned him to have several millions' worth of gold pieces of a new weight coined at the Paris Mint; then, suddenly, the order was withdrawn and given to Hemerlingue. Publicly disgraced, Jansoulet retorted by a public manifestation, putting up to auction all his property, his palace at the Bardo

given him by the late Bey, his villas at La Marse, all of white marble, surrounded by splendid gardens, his offices which were the largest and most sumptuous in the town, enjoining last on the intelligent Bompain to bring him back his wife and children, as if to show that he had gone for good. After such a rupture, it was not easy to return; that was what he tried to make Mademoiselle Afchin understand, who only replied by prolonged groans. He tried to console her, to amuse her, but what could amuse that monstrously apathetic nature?

A familiar of the house nevertheless succeeded in doing so—Cabassu, the man who called himself on his cards: "Professor of Massage," a big, dark, thickset man, smelling of garlic and pomatum, square-shouldered, with hair up to his eyes, who knew tales of Parisian seraglios, anecdotes within reach of Madame's understanding. He once came to massage her, and she wished to see him again, and retained him. He had to give up all his other customers, and, with a senatorial salary, became the massager of this stout person, her page, her reader, her body-guard. Jansoulet, enchanted at seeing his wife contented, did not feel the stupid absurdity attached to such an intimacy.

There was no maternal instinct in her. She never troubled about her children, leaving them to the care of strangers. They were three big, heavy, apathetic boys of eleven, nine, and seven, with the dark, velvety, kindly eyes of their father, and the pale complexion and premature stoutness of the Levantine. They were as ignorant as the young seigneurs of the Middle Ages; at Tunis M. Bompain superintended their studies, but, in Paris, the Nabob, insisting on giving them the

benefit of a Parisian education, had placed them in the most fashionable, the dearest boarding-school, the Bourdaloue College, which was managed by worthy Fathers, who tried less to educate their pupils than to make them well-behaved, correct-thinking men of the world, and succeeded in creating stiff, ridiculous little monsters, disdainful of games, absolutely ignorant, without anything spontaneous or childlike in them, and desperately precocious. The little Jansoulets did not enjoy themselves much in that forcing-house, despite the immunities their immense fortune procured them; they were indeed too much neglected. Even the Creoles confided to the institution had correspondents and visits, but the Jansoulets were never invited to the parlour, nobody knew any of their relations, only, every now and then, they used to receive hampers of confectionery and mountains of cakes.

When they came to see their parents, they were entrusted to the man with the red fez, the indispensable Bompain. It was Bompain who took them to the Champs Elysées, dressed in English costumes, with caps in the latest fashion—at seven!—and little canes in their dog-skin gloves. It was Bompain who stuffed the four-in-hand with provisions on race-days and drove with the boys, their tickets stuck in their hats which were wrapped in green veils, something like those characters in Lilliputian pantomimes whose entire comicality lies in the large size of their heads, compared with their small legs and dwarfish gestures. They used to smoke, to drink: it was piteous. Sometimes, the man with the fez, hardly able to stand upright, would bring them home dreadfully sick. And yet Jansoulet was fond of his "kids," especially the

youngest, who, with his long hair, his doll-like expression, reminded him of the little Afchin as she used to pass in her carriage. But they were still at an age when children belong to their mother, when neither a swell tailor, nor first-rate masters, nor a chic school, nor the ponies saddled for the little riders in the stable —when nothing can replace the mother's attentive and careful hand, the warmth and cheerfulness of the family nest. The father could not give them that; and, besides, he was so busy!

There were numberless affairs to look after. The Caisse Territoriale, the installation of the picture gallery, drives to Tattersall's with Bois-Landry, a bibelot to go and see, here or there, at the houses of amateurs mentioned by Schwalbach, hours spent with trainers, jockeys, curio merchants—the crowded and multifarious life of a bourgeois gentleman in modern Paris. His life was really very much occupied, although De Géry relieved him of his heaviest burden, the complicated department of charity.

It was now the young man who investigated in his place all the bold and burlesque inventions, all the heroïco-comical combinations of that mendicity of a large town, which is organised like a ministry, is innumerable as an army, is subscribed to the papers, and knows its Bottin by heart. De Géry suggested retrenchment to the Nabob. But, at the first, the Nabob assumed the bored expression of weak characters, who have to take a decisive resolution, or else he replied with a shrug of his broad shoulders: "But that's Paris all over, my dear boy. Don't be frightened, leave it to me; I know where I am going and what I want."

He then wanted two things, to be deputy and to get the Cross. In his eyes they were the two first rungs on the high ladder up which ambition was driving him. He would certainly be made deputy through the Caisse Territoriale, whose head he was. Paganetti of Porto-Vecchio often used to say:

"When the day comes, the island will rise and vote for you, as one man."

But it is not enough to have electors; a seat must also be vacant in the Chamber, and Corsica was completely represented there. One of them, nevertheless, old Popolasca, weakly in health, unable to fulfil his duties, might perhaps be ready to send in his resignation on certain conditions. It was a delicate matter, but quite feasible, as the worthy man had a numerous family, estates which did not yield two per cent., a ruinous palace at Bastia, where his children lived on polenta, and, in Paris, tenth-rate furnished bedrooms. If the Nabob did not split straws about one or two hundred thousand francs, he might make a deal with this honourable starveling, who, when sounded by Paganetti, said neither no nor yes, seduced by the large sum, restrained by the vainglory of his position. Such was the state of things, and it might come to a decisive result any day.

As for the Cross, everything was going still better. The Bethlehem Refuge had undoubtedly made a deuce of a sensation at the Tuileries. They were only awaiting M. de la Perrière's visit and his report, which could not fail to be favourable, to inscribe on the list of 16th March, the date of an Imperial anniversary, Jansoulet's glorious name—the 16th of March, that is, within a month. What would fat

Hemerlingue say about that signal favour, he who had had to content himself so long with the Nisham? And the Bey, who had been made to believe that Jansoulet was ostracised by Parisian Society, and his old mother down there at St Romans, who was always so happy at her son's successes? Was not that worth a few millions cleverly squandered?

CHAPTER VII

The Bethlehem Refuge

Bethlehem! why did it make one feel cold to read that sweet, legendary name, warm as the straw in the miraculous stable, in gold letters over that iron grille? It was perhaps part of the melancholy landscape, that immense, gloomy plain that goes from Nanterre to Saint-Cloud, relieved only by a few tree-clumps or the smoke of factory chimneys. Perhaps, also, it was due to the glaring contrast between the humble village of Bethlehem and this grandiose building, a villa in the Louis XIII. style in agglomerate concrete, which seemed quite pink between the branches of its leafless park, where wide expanses of water, thick with green mosses, were displayed to view. It is, at any rate, certain that, as you passed by, your heart tightened. When you went in, it was quite a different thing. A heavy, inexplicable silence weighed on the house, where the faces appearing at the window had a lugubrious look behind the small, old-fashioned, greenish panes. The nursing goats that wandered in the avenues languidly nibbled at the fresh shoots, crying "ba-a-a" to their weary keeper who followed the visitors with a sad eye.

To speak the truth, the whole establishment was

merely a huge infirmary. Hardly did the children arrive, than they fell ill, languished, and finally died, unless the parents took them speedily back to the safety of their homes. That is what gave the poor house so heart-rending an aspect. A house where children die cannot be cheerful. Excellent in itself, Jenkins's idea was of extremely difficult, almost impossible application. Yet God knows that the establishment had been set up with excessive zeal in all the least details, and no money or men had been spared. At the head was one of the cleverest practitioners, M. Pondevèz, a pupil of the Paris hospitals; and after him came Madame Polge, a trustworthy woman, for the more delicate matters. Then there were servants, laundresses, sick-nurses, and what improvements and up-to-dateness, from the water-supply with its fifty patent taps, down to the omnibus, with its coachman in the Bethlehem livery, going to the Rueil station to meet all the trains during the day, and sounding its bells! Lastly, there were magnificent goats—Tibet goats, silky, swollen with milk. So far as organisation went, everything was admirable; but, beyond this, there was something wrong. The artificial suckling, so praised in puffing articles, did not suit the children.

The manager had at first been shocked at the number of deaths. Pondevèz, a waif from the life of the Quartier Latin, who had studied for twenty years, and was well known in all the pothouses of the Boulevard Saint-Michel under the name of Pompon, was not a bad fellow. When he perceived the small success of artificial suckling, he coolly engaged four or five vigorous wet-nurses from the country, and nothing else was needed to restore the children's

appetites. This humane impulse nearly cost him his berth.

"Wet-nurses at Bethlehem!" said Jenkins, in a rage, when he paid his weekly visit. "Are you mad? Why, then, should we have goats, and meadows in which to feed them, and my idea, and the brochures on my idea? What's to be the end of it all? But you are opposing my system, you are stealing the money of the founder."

"Still, my dear maître," the student tried to answer, passing his hands through his long red beard, "Still, as they don't want goat's milk"

"Well, then, let them fast, but the principle of artificial suckling must be obeyed. That's the whole thing in a nutshell. Don't let me have to repeat it to you. Get rid of those dreadful wet-nurses. We have goat's milk on which to rear our children, cow's milk only in extreme necessity; but I can't let them have more."

He added, with his apostolic air:

"We are here to demonstrate a great philanthropic idea. It must be made to triumph, even at a cost of a few sacrifices. See to it."

Pondevèz did not insist. All the wet-nurses were dismissed, and a veritable massacre of the innocents ensued. And as the mortality went on increasing, the omnibus that went to meet the trains used to return light and springy as an empty hearse. How long would that last? How long would the twenty or thirty remaining children take to die? That was what the manager, or, rather, as he had nicknamed himself, the registrar of deaths, Pondevèz, asked himself one morning, as he sat opposite Madame Polge's venerable person after breakfast and played her favourite game

of bezique, when a double ring at the entrance grille interrupted his thoughts. The omnibus had returned from the railway, and its wheels were creaking on the sand in quite unaccustomed fashion.

"Astonishing!" said Pondevèz. "The carriage is not empty."

Indeed, it came as far as the steps with a certain pride, and the man who stepped out ran up stairs in great haste: a messenger from Jenkins, bringing great news: the doctor would arrive in two hours to visit the Refuge, with the Nabob and a gentleman from the Tuileries. He urgently enjoined that everything should be ready for their reception. The matter had been settled so quickly that he had not had time to write; but he reckoned on M. Pondevèz to do what was necessary.

"'Necessary' is good!" muttered Pondevèz, quite frightened. The position was critical. This important visit fell at the worst possible moment, when the system had completely failed. Poor Pompon, very perplexed, tugged at his beard, gnawing the ends.

"Come," he said all at once to Madame Polge, whose long face was growing longer. "There's only one thing for us to do. We must depeople the infirmary, transport all the invalids into the dormitory. They will be neither the better nor the worse for having been replaced there for half a day. As for those with skin-diseases, we shall put them away into a corner. They look too awful, we must not show them. Quick now! All hands to work!"

The dinner-bell being vigorously rung, there was at once a sound of hurried footsteps. Laundresses, sick-nurses, servants, keepers, come from everywhere, run, hustle each other on the staircases, in the courtyards.

There is a din of orders, shouts, and calls: but what dominates all is the noise of a great washing-up, of a flowing of water, as if Bethlehem had just taken fire. And the cries of sick children, taken from the warmth of their beds, all those little moaning parcels, carried through the damp park, with their bed-coverings floating among the branches, completed the impression of a fire. Two hours after, thanks to prodigious activity, the house is ready from top to bottom for the reception of the visitors, all the staff are at their posts, the stove lighted, the goats picturesquely scattered through the park. Madame Polge has put on her green silk dress, the manager is less careless as to his clothes than usual, but their simplicity excludes any idea of preparation. The Imperial Secretary may come now.

And there he is.

He steps out with Jenkins and Jansoulet from a superb carriage, attended by the Nabob's liveried servants in red and gold. Feigning the greatest amazement, Pondevèz rushes to meet his visitors.

"Ah! M. Jenkins, what an honour! What a surprise!"

Greetings, bows, hand-shakes, introductions are exchanged on the threshold. Jenkins, his loose overcoat floating wide open on his loyal chest, expands into his best and heartiest smile; still, a significant furrow appears on his forehead. He is uneasy at the surprises that the Refuge may have in store, as he knows the wretchedness of it better than anybody. If only Pondevèz has taken precautions At least, the beginning is good. The rather theatrical appearance of the entrance, the white fleeces bounding through the shrubbery, have delighted M. de la Perrière, who

himself resembles a she-goat escaped from its stake, with his simple eyes, his white imperial, the continual uplifting of his head.

"First of all, gentlemen, the most important room in the house, the Nursery," says the manager, opening a massive door at the end of the ante-room. The gentlemen follow him, go down a few steps, and find themselves in an immense, low paved room once the château kitchen. As you enter, you are struck by a high, huge, old-fashioned chimney-piece of red brick; two stone benches opposite one another beneath the mantel-piece, with the arms of the late owner, a singer—an enormous lyre barred by a roll of music—sculptured on the monumental front. The effect is startling; but there comes a terrible draught, which, added to the cold flags of the floor, to the wan light falling from the gratings, which are on a level with the ground, makes you frightened for the well-being of the children. They had to install the Nursery in this unhealthy place, because of the goats who were accustomed to all the freedom of the stable.

The room is so lofty in its dark walls, that the visitors thought at first the Nursery was empty. But they presently hear a noisy group, ba-a-ing and moaning. Two country women, with hard expressions, and brutalised, earthy faces, two "dry-nurses," well meriting their name, were seated on mats, a baby on their arms, each having in front of them a big goat that is offering its teat, legs apart. The manager appears joyfully surprised.

"Well, gentlemen, this is indeed lucky. Two of our babies are just about to take a little lunch. We shall see how the goats and the babies get on together."

"What is the matter with him? He is mad," said Jenkins to himself, terrified.

But the manager is, on the contrary, very clear-headed, and has himself skilfully organised the *mise-en-scène*, choosing two patient, gentle animals, and two exceptional patients—two strong youngsters who want to live at any price, and open their mouths to any sort of nourishment, like little birds still in their nest.

"Come, gentlemen, and look for yourselves."

They are really suckling, the cherubs. One of them, who had vanished, gathered up under the goat's belly, goes at it so lustily that you hear the gurgling of the warm milk going down to his little legs, that wriggle about with the pleasure of the meal. The other one, lying more quietly, lazily, needs a little encouragement from his Auvergnat guardian:

"Suck away, suck away!"

Finally, as if he had suddenly made up his mind, he starts sucking with so much ardour that the woman bends towards him, surprised at his extraordinary appetite, and cries out, laughing:

"Oh! the rascal! he's sucking his thumb instead of the teat."

The little darling has discovered, indeed, that way of being left in peace. The incident has no bad result; on the contrary, M. de la Perrière is much amused by the nurse's idea, that the baby wanted to play them a trick. He leaves the Nursery enchanted. "Positively en-en-enchanted," he repeats, nodding his head, as he goes up the wide staircase, with its echoing walls adorned with antlers, that leads to the dormitory.

This vast room, well-lighted and well-aired, occupies a whole side of the house, with numerous windows,

cradles with spaces between, hung with fleecy curtains and white as clouds. Women come and go in the broad centre passage, with piles of linen on their arms, keys in their hands. Here there has been an intention to make things look well, and the visitors' first impression is bad. All that white muslin, that waxed floor in which the light displays itself without being absorbed, the clear windows that reflect a sky saddened to behold such things, bring out in stronger relief the thinness, the unhealthy pallor of the dying children, white as shrouds.

Jenkins and the manager, who have perceived the bad effect produced on their guests by the visit to the dormitory, try to enliven the situation, talk very loudly in a hearty, satisfied tone. Jenkins shakes hands vigorously with the superintendent.

"Well, Madame Polge, how are the little dears?"

"As you see, doctor," she replied, pointing to the beds.

She is funereal in her green dress, is that tall Madame Polge, the ideal of dry-nurses. She completes the picture.

But where is the Imperial Secretary? He has stopped before a cradle, which he examines sadly, his head nodding.

"Confound it!" whispers Pompon to Madame Polge. "It's the Wallachian"

The small blue label, nailed above the cradle, just as in hospitals, announces indeed the child's nationality: "Moldo-Wallachian" What a nuisance that the Secretary's attention should have been attracted just to that one! Oh! the poor little head, lying on the pillow, its cap on one side, its nostrils pinched, its mouth half-open in a short, panting, breath, the breath

of those who have just been born, even as of those who are about to die!

"Is he ill?" gently queries the Secretary to the manager, who has come near.

"Not in the slightest," answers the shameless Pompon, and, stepping to the cradle, he shakes his finger at him, smooths the pillow, says in a deep rather rough, affectionate voice: "Well! old fellow." Shaken out of his torpor, coming forth from the already enveloping shadow of death, the child opens his eyes on the faces bending over him, regards them with dull indifference; then, going back to his dream, which he finds more beautiful, he clenches his small, wrinkled hands, and heaves an imperceptible sigh.

"How pale he is!" mutters M. de la Perrière, very pale himself. The Nabob, too, is livid. A cold draught has just gone by. The manager assumes a jaunty air.

"It's the reflection. We are all green here."

"Yes, yes," intervenes Jenkins, "it's the reflection from the lake. Come and see, Monsieur le Secrétaire." And he draws him to the window to show him the lake in which the willows dip, whilst Madame Polge hastens to cover the little Wallachian's eternal dream with the curtains of his cradle.

They have quickly to continue with the visit of inspection, in order to destroy this unfavourable impression.

They first of all take M. de la Perrière to a splendid laundry. As can be seen, there is perfect order, and everything, even to its healthy smell of soap-suds, gives the room a wholesome, country appearance. Jenkins wanted to set up a model establishment; and it was easy for him to do, because the

work was carried out on a large scale, regardless of cost. The experience and the iron hand of "our intelligent superintendent" may be seen in all that, and the manager cannot help publicly acknowledging the service of Madame Polge. This is the signal for general congratulation; M. de la Perrière, delighted at the manner in which the Refuge is got up, congratulates Dr Jenkins on his fine institution, Jenkins compliments his friend Pondevèz, who thanks in turn the Imperial Secretary on having condescended to honour Bethlehem with his visit. The good Nabob mingles his voice in the concert of praises, finds a pleasant word for each, and is a little astonished, all the same, that he himself has not been congratulated whilst they were about it. It is true the best of congratulations awaits him on 16th of March, at the beginning of the *Journal Officiel*, in a decree that flames beforehand in his eyes, and causes him to glance sideways at his button-hole.

Presently, the inspection over, they are seated in the ground-floor room, where Madame Polge has prepared a little lunch for them. The cellars of Bethlehem are well provided. The keen air of the plateau, the ascents and descents, have given the old gentleman from the Tuileries such an appetite as he has not known for a long time, so that he talks and laughs with quite a countrified intimacy, and, when he has to leave, and all are standing, he raises his glass, nodding his head to drink: "To Be-Be-Bethlehem!" Emotion overflows, glasses clash, then the carriage, at full trot, carries off the visitors by the long lime avenue, where a red, cold, rayless sun is setting. Behind them the park resumes its gloomy silence. Large, sombre masses gather at the back

of the brushwood, invade the house, gradually reach the walks and the apses. Soon the only lighted places are the ironical letters on the grille, and at a window upstairs on the first floor a red, quivering spot, the light of a taper kindled by the bedside of the dead child.

* * * * *

"By decree of 12th March, 1865, proclaimed by proposal of the Minister of the Interior, Dr Jenkins, President and Founder of the Bethlehem Refuge, is created a Knight of the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honour. Great devotion to the cause of humanity."

The poor Nabob, when he read these lines on the first page of the *Journal Officiel* on the morning of the 16th, was dazed and bewildered.

Was it possible?

Jenkins decorated, and not he?

He read the paragraph twice, thinking his eyes were mistaken. His ears were buzzing. The letters danced before his eyes with those red circles which they take in broad sunlight. He had been so sure of seeing his name in that place; Jenkins—the very day before—had told him so confidently: "The thing is done!" that it seemed to him there must be some error. Yet no, it was Jenkins. The shock was deep, intimate, prophetic, like a first warning of destiny, and it was felt the more keenly because he had been unaccustomed to disappointment for some years, living as he did above humanity. Everything good in him learnt at the same time to mistrust.

"Well," said he to De Géry, who went, as usual, every morning, into his room, and came upon him in his agitation, with the newspaper in his hand, "You have seen——? I am not in the Officiel."

He tried to laugh, his features swollen, like a child keeping back its tears. Then, suddenly, with the frankness that was so pleasing in him: "That hurts me a great deal—I expected it too much."

The door opened on his words, and Jenkins rushed in, out of breath, stammering, extraordinarily agitated:

"It is an infamy—a fearful infamy. It cannot be, it shall not be."

The words hurried in a tumult to his lips, trying to issue all at a single time; then he seemed to give up expressing his thoughts, and threw on the table a small shagreen box and a large envelope, both with the stamp of the Chancellery.

"There's my Cross and my brevet. They are yours, friend. I could not keep them."

At bottom, it all meant very little. If Jansoulet had worn Jenkins's ribbon, he would have been convicted of illegally wearing it. But a theatrical climax is not bound to be logical; this particular coup led to an expansiveness between the two men, embraces, a generous struggle, after which Jenkins restored the objects to his pocket, talking of protests, letters to the papers—— The Nabob was at last obliged to stop him.

"Whatever you do, don't do that. First of all, it would injure me for another time—who knows? Perhaps on the next 15th August—— "

"Oh! as regards that," said Jenkins, leaping at the idea; and, extending his arms, as in David's "Serment": "I take a sacred oath."

The matter rested there. At breakfast, the Nabob spoke of nothing, was as jovial as usual. His good humour did not change the whole day. In the evening, the Nabob had opened a wretched little

portfolio, ragged at the corners, where for the past ten years he used to write down millions of francs, in hieroglyphics intelligible to him alone, spent in charities and other expenses. He was absorbed a while in his accounts, when, turning to De Géry, he asked:

"Do you know what I am doing, my dear Paul?"

"No, sir."

"I am just reckoning"—and his jocular look, characteristic of his country, laughed at the good nature in his smile—"I am just reckoning that I have spent four hundred and thirty thousand francs in order to get Jenkins decorated."

Four hundred and thirty thousand francs! And that was not the end of it.

CHAPTER VII

Bonne Maman

THREE times a week Paul de Géry went in the evening to take his lesson in book-keeping in the Joyeuse dining-room, not far from the little drawing-room where he had seen the family on his first visit; and, while his eyes were fixed on his white-cravated teacher, and he was initiated into all the mysteries of debit and credit, he used to listen, in spite of himself, to the light noise of the industrious evening spent behind the door, regretting he could not see all those pretty foreheads bent beneath the lamp. M. Joyeuse never said a word of his daughters. Jealous of their graces as a dragon keeping guard over beautiful princesses in a tower, excited by the fantastic imaginings of his excessive tenderness, he replied very dryly to his pupil's questions, when he asked about "the young ladies," so that the young man no longer mentioned them. But he was astonished at never having seen that Bonne Maman whose name was constantly on M. Joyeuse's lips in the smallest details of his existence, hovering over the house like the emblem of her perfect orderliness and peace.

Such reserve, on the part of a venerable lady who must have passed the age at which the audacities of

young men may be feared, seemed to him exaggerated. However, the lessons were on the whole good, and given in very lucid fashion, the professor had an excellent method of demonstration, and he had but one fault, that of plunging into silences interrupted by sudden starts, by interjections, that went off like fusees. Apart from that, he was the best of masters—intelligent, patient and honest.

One evening, about nine, when the young man rose to leave, M. Joyeuse invited him to take a cup of tea with the family, a habit dating from the time of Madame Joyeuse, *née* de Saint-Amand, who used to receive her friends every Thursday. Since she had died and their circumstances had changed, the friends had vanished, this little "weekly extra" had been kept up. Paul having accepted, the professor just opened the door and called:

"Bonne Maman."

An alert step in the passage, and, all of a sudden, a face of twenty, encircled with abundant light brown hair, appeared. De Géry, stupefied, looked at M. Joyeuse:

"Bonne Maman?"

"Yes, it's a name we gave her when she was a little girl. With her frilled cap, her air of authority as the eldest, she had such a queer, sensible, little face. We thought she resembled her grandmother. The name stuck to her."

Whether it was because of the name of grandmother, which, as a mere child, he had learnt to cherish, or whatever the cause, De Géry found an inexpressible seductiveness in the young girl. It did not, in the least, resemble the sudden shock he had received full in his heart from a certain other woman,

that troubled feeling with which was mingled a desire to flee, to escape an obsession, and the persistent melancholy that follows the day after a fête, extinguished lustres, forgotten refrains, perfumes vanished in the night. No, before that young girl standing up, superintending the family table, seeing if anything was missing, bending on her children, her little children, her active, tender eyes, the temptation came to him to know her, to become an old friend, to confide to her things he only avowed to himself, and when she offered him his cup, without any society archness or drawing-room affectations, he would have liked to say, like the others, a "Thank you, Bonne Maman," in which he would have put his whole heart.

Suddenly, a joyful, vigorous knock made everybody start.

"Ah! here is M. André—Élise, a cup, quick!—Yaia, the cakes!"

"My fifth act is finished," cried the newcomer as he entered, then stopped short. "Ah! excuse me," and his face assumed a rather discomfited expression, as he noticed a stranger. M. Joyeuse introduced them to one another; "M. Paul de Géry—M. André Maranne," not without a certain solemnity. He remembered his wife's former receptions; and the vases on the chimney-piece, the two big lamps, the what-not, the arm-chairs in a circle appeared to share this illusion, and were more brilliant and rejuvenated in the unaccustomed company.

"So your play is finished?"

"Finished, M. Joyeuse, and I hope to read it to you one of these evenings."

"Oh, yes, M. André—oh, yes," chorused all the young girls.

Their neighbour was working at plays, and nobody there doubted he would succeed. There was less chance of profit in photography. Customers were very rare; passers-by were not inclined that way. In order to keep his hand in and employ his new apparatus, M. André photographed every Sunday the family of his friends, which lent itself to his experiments with unequalled long-suffering, the prosperity of this suburban, new-fledged photographer being for all of them an affair of self-love, awakening, even in the girls, that touching confraternity which binds the lowliest destinies together, like sparrows on the eaves. Besides, André Maranne, endowed with the inexhaustible imaginings of his big forehead which was full of illusions, explained the indifference of the public without bitterness. The season was unfavourable, or business was bad, and he would end with a consolatory burden: "When I get 'Révolte' played!" That was the title of his play.

"Still, it's astonishing," said the fourth Demoiselle Joyeuse, twelve years old, hair *à la chinoise*, "it's astonishing that there should be so little business with so fine a balcony."

"And there are always plenty of passers-by," adds Élise with assurance. Bonne Maman smilingly observes that the Boulevard des Italiens is even fuller.

"Ah! if he were on the Boulevard des Italiens," says M. Joyeuse, dreamily, and off he goes with his chimæra, which is all at once stopped by a gesture and these words, which he utters mournfully: "Closed through bankruptcy." In one minute the terrible visionary had installed his friend in splendid rooms on the Boulevard, where he makes a huge pile, whilst increasing his expenses so disproper-

tionately that the photographer and his photography come to grief in a few months. There is much laughing as he explains this; but, on the whole, everyone is agreed that the Rue Saint-Ferdinand, although less brilliant, is far safer than the Boulevard des Italiens. Besides, it is quite near the Bois de Boulogne, and if once fashionable society should start coming this way — that society about which her mother was so eager, is Mademoiselle Henriette's fixed idea; and she is astonished that the idea of receiving society on his small fifth floor, narrow as a bell-glass, should make their neighbour laugh. Yet, the other week, a carriage came, with liveried servants. Quite recently, too, he had a "very swagger" visit.

"Oh! quite a grande dame," interrupts Bonne Maman. "We were at the window, waiting for papa. We saw her get out of the carriage and look at the frame; we thought it was for you."

"It was for me," says André, a trifle embarrassed.

"We were afraid for a moment that she would pass on, like so many others, because of your five stairs. So there we were, all four of us, staring at her, magnetising her, with our four pairs of open eyes, without her suspecting it. We drew her quite gently by the feathers of her hat and the lace on her pelisse. 'Come up, Madame, come up!' At last she entered. There is so much magnetism in eyes that wish well!"

The dear creature certainly had magnetism, not only in her eyes of undecided colour, veiled or laughing, like the sky of her Paris, but in her voice, in the draperies of her dress, in the long ringlet, shading her straight, beautiful, statue-like neck, which

attracted you by its rather blonde point, prettily twisted round a supple finger.

Being now admitted into this charming home-life, he no longer kept away, took his lessons among the young girls, and grew bold enough to talk with them, when the Professor closed his ledger. Everything here rested him from the whirling life into which he was thrown by the Nabob's luxurious worldliness; he refreshed himself in this atmosphere of honesty, of simplicity; tried, too, to heal in it the wounds which a woman's hand, indifferent rather than cruel, was inflicting on his heart.

* * * * *

"Some women have hated me, others have loved me. She who hurt me most never had either love or hate for me." It was that type of woman, of whom Heine speaks, that Paul had met. Felicia was full of welcome and cordiality towards him. There was no one on whom she looked more kindly. She kept for him a special smile, in which one felt the good-will of an artistic eye dwelling on a type that pleased it, and the gratification of a bored mind which the novelty amuses, however simple it may appear. She liked his reserve, piquant in a southerner, the correctness of his judgment, which was free from any artistic or society formula, and enlivened with a dash of local accent. She had nicknamed him Minerva, on account of his apparent tranquillity, the regularity of his profile; and when she saw him in the distance:

"Ah! there's Minerva. . . . All hail, beautiful Minerva. Lay your helmet aside, and let's have a chat."

The familiar, almost fraternal tone, however, convinced the young man of the futility of his love. He felt he would not advance any further in that feminine comradeship, in which affection was absent, and that he was every day losing his charm of novelty in the eyes of a woman who was born bored, who seemed to have already lived her life, and found in all she heard or saw the insipidity of a recommencement. Felicia was tired of life. Her art alone was able to distract her, to raise and transport her into a dazzling fairy-land, whence she fell back again all bruised, always astonished at that awakening which resembled a fall. During those artistic reveries, when the absent mind leaves the hand heavy on its instrument, Felicia, deprived of the sole moral strength of her mind, became savage, morose, harassing in her mockery, the revenge of human weakness against great brains that are wearied. After she had brought tears into the eyes of all that loved her, dug into distressing memories or enervating anxieties, touched the brutal, bruising depths of her fatigue, as she must always needs mingle some odd drollery with the saddest things, she evaporated all the ennui that remained, in a kind of tired wild beast's cry, a roaring yawn which she called "the cry of the jackal in the desert," and which made the good Crenmitz turn pale, as she started in her dozing indolence.

Poor Felicia! her life was truly a howling wilderness when it was not cheered by the mirages of art—a dull, flat wilderness in which everything was lost, levelled beneath the same monotonous immensity, the simple love of a child of twenty, the caprice of a passionate duke, in which all was covered by a dry sand blown by burning fates. Paul felt this negation, wished to

escape it; but something kept him back, like a weight that unwinds a chain, and, in spite of the calumnies he had heard, the bizarreneesses of the strange creature, he lingered enraptured near her at risk of gaining nothing from his long, loving contemplation but the despair of a believer who is reduced to adore images merely.

The refuge for him lay in that obscure suburb, where the wind blew so hard without preventing the flame from rising white and straight—it was the family circle presided over by Bonne Maman. Oh! she was not weary; she never uttered the cry of "the jackal in the desert." Her life was too well filled; her father to encourage, the children to teach, all the material cares of a home where the mother is wanting; such preoccupations awakened with the dawn and lulled to sleep at night, unless they are revived in dreams, one of those indefatigable devotions, apparently effortless, very convenient for poor human egoism, because they require no gratitude and are hardly perceived, so light-handed are they.

As happens in families that have begun in comfortable circumstances, Aline, as the eldest, had been brought up in one of the best schools of Paris. Élise had remained there with her two years; but the two last, who came too late, and were sent into small neighbouring schools, had their education to complete, and it was not an easy thing, the youngest laughing at everything with a laugh of good health, expansiveness, youth, the warbling of a lark, drunk with green corn, flying out of sight, far from the desk and methodicalness, whilst Mademoiselle Henriette, continually haunted by her ideas of grandeur, her love of "swells," did not take any more readily to work. That young

person of fifteen, to whom her father had bequeathed a little of his imaginative faculties, was already arranging her life in advance, and formally declared that she would marry one of the nobility, and would never have more than three children: "A boy—for the name, and two little girls—to dress them alike."

"Good," said Bonne Maman, "you will dress them alike. Meanwhile, let us see about our participles."

But the most troublesome one was Élise, who had gone up three times for examination without success, being always plucked in history. She was preparing herself again, filled with a great fright and distrust of herself, which made her take everywhere about with her and open every moment that unhappy manual of French history in the omnibus, in the street, even at the breakfast-table. Yet Aline, in the intervals of her numerous tasks as teacher and general superintendent, found means to sew pretty things, to take out of her work-basket some small crochet or embroidery work, which she no more left out of her hands than Élise her history of France. Even whilst talking, her fingers were not one minute unemployed.

"Don't you ever rest?" De Géry would say, whilst she counted in a low voice the stitches of her embroidery, "three, four, five," to vary the shades.

"But such work is rest," she would answer. "You men can't think how useful needlework is for women's brains. It regulates thought, fixes by a stitch the minute that passes, and what it may carry with it. What distress is soothed, what anxieties forgotten, thanks to this necessity of attention, to this repetition of an identical movement in which we, perforce, quickly recover the equilibrium of our whole being. It does not hinder me from hearing what is

said around me, of listening to you even better than I should do if I were unoccupied—three, four, five."

A similarity of natures, of responsibilities and duties, brought these two young people together, made them take an interest in one another's affairs. Every day Paul De Géry appreciated Mademoiselle Aline better —he was the only one in the house who called her Aline—and, strangely enough, it was Felicia who cemented their intimacy. What relations could there be between the artist's daughter, moving in the highest circles, and that little bourgeoise lost in the obscurity of a faubourg? Relations of childhood and friendship, common memories, the big court-yard of Madame Belin's school, where they had played together for three years. Paris is full of such connections. A name uttered casually in conversation gives rise at once to the astonished question:

"You know her then?"

"I should think I do know Felicia. But our desks in the first class were next one another. We had the same garden. What a good, beautiful, clever girl!"

And, seeing the pleasure he took in listening, Aline recalled the years so recently gone by, which already were giving her a past—charming and melancholy as all pasts are. She was very much alone in life, little Felicia. On Thursdays, when the names were called out in the parlour, there was no one for her; except, from time to time, a somewhat quaint person, who, it was said, was a former dancer, whom Felicia called the fairy. She had also nicknames for all persons she liked, and whom she transformed in her imagination. They saw one another during the holidays. Madame Joyeuse, whilst refusing to allow Aline to visit at M. Ruys' studio, invited Felicia for whole days at her

house, too short days they were, spent in work, music, confidential dreams, free, young talk. "Oh! when she talked to me of her art with that ardour which she put into everything, how happy I was to listen! What things I got to understand through her, of which I should not have had any conception! Even now, when we go to the Louvre with papa, or to the 1st of May Exhibition, the particular emotion produced by a beautiful sculpture, a fine picture, carries me back at once to Felicia. In my youth she has represented art, and it well suited her beauty, her rather inconsequent but so good-natured disposition, in which I felt something superior to me, which raised me very high without frightening me. She suddenly stopped seeing me. I wrote to her; no answer. Then glory came to her; to me great sorrows, absorbing duties. And of all that friendship—it was a deep friendship, since I cannot speak of it without—three, four, five—there remains nothing but old memories to stir up, like cold cinders."

Bending over her work, the brave girl was hurriedly counting her stitches, hiding her anguish in the capricious designs of the tapestry, whilst De Géry, deeply affected at hearing the testimony of her pure mouth in contradiction of the calumnies of a few unsuccessful dandies or jealous comrades, felt relieved, restored to pride in his love. The feeling appeared so sweet that he very often came in search of it, not only on the evenings of the lesson, but on other evenings too, and he almost forgot to go and see Felicia in the pleasure of hearing Aline talk about her.

One evening, as he was leaving the Joyeuses, Paul found on the landing the neighbour, M. André, who was awaiting him, and took his arm feverishly:

"M. de Géry," he said in a trembling voice, his eyes flashing behind the spectacles—the only part of his face that could be seen in the darkness—"I have an explanation to ask of you. Will you come up an instant to my rooms?"

As soon as the door was shut he addressed Paul in the tones of a theatrical hero addressing the treacherous seducer:

"Monsieur de Géry, I am not yet a Cassandra."

Then, noticing De Géry's amazement, he went on:

"Yes, yes, we understand one another. I comprehend very well what draws you to M. Joyeuse, and the warm welcome accorded you has not escaped me either. You are rich, you are noble; no one would hesitate between you and the poor poet who follows a trade which is ridiculous till it is successful, which perhaps it will never be. But I shall not allow my happiness to be stolen. We shall fight, sir; we shall fight," he repeated, exasperated by his rival's peaceful calm. "I have for a long time been in love with Mademoiselle Joyeuse. That love is the goal, the cheerfulness, and the strength of an existence which is very hard and painful from many points of view. It is the only thing I have in the world, and I should prefer to die than to renounce it."

What an odd thing the human soul is! Paul did not love the charming Aline. His whole heart belonged to another. He only thought of her as of a friend—the most adorable of friends. Well! the notion that Maranne was thinking of her, that she doubtless responded to his amorous attentions, made him tremble with the anger of a jealous man, and he asked, quite sharply, if Mademoiselle Joyeuse knew

of André's feelings, and had authorised him in any way thus to proclaim his rights.

"Yes, sir; Mademoiselle Élise knows that I love her, and before your frequent visits——"

"Élise—you are speaking of Élise?"

"And whom do you think I was speaking of? The other two are too young."

He certainly had entered into the traditions of the family. In his case, Bonne Maman's twenty years, her triumphant grace, were concealed by her nickname, which inspired respect, and its providential attributes.

A very brief explanation having calmed André's mind, he excused himself to Paul, made him sit down in the arm-chair of carved wood, that served for the posing of customers, and their talk soon became intimate and sympathetic, brought on by the animation of the original avowal. Paul confessed that he also was in love, and that he only came so often to M. Joyeuse in order to speak of her whom he loved with Bonne Maman, who had formerly known her.

"It's like me," said André; "I have told Bonne Maman everything; but we have not yet dared to say anything to the father. My position is not assured enough. Ah! when I get my 'Révolte' played!"

Then they spoke about the famous drama "Révolte!" at which he had been working for six months, night and day, which had kept him warm during the whole winter—a very rough winter; but the magic of composition had mitigated its rigors in the little studio it transformed. It was not only glory and money that the heaven-sent play was to procure him, but also something yet more precious.

With what care, accordingly, he turned over the leaves of his manuscript, written in five big copy-books, all covered with blue. As Paul in his turn approached the table, in order to examine the masterpiece, his attention was attracted by a richly framed woman's portrait, which, in such close proximity to the artist's work, seemed to be there to preside over it—Élise, no doubt? Oh! no, André had not yet acquired the right of taking his little friend's portrait from its protecting *entourage*. It was a woman of forty, gentle-looking, blonde, and extremely elegant. On seeing it, De Géry could not restrain an exclamation:

"You know her?" said André Maranne.

"Yes, certainly, Madame Jenkins, the wife of the Irish doctor. I have dined with them this winter."

"She is my mother;" and the young man added in a lower tone:

"Madame Maranne married Dr Jenkins as her second husband. You are surprised, are you not, to see me in this distress, when my mother lives amid luxury? But, you know, chance sometimes brings together such different natures in a family. My father-in-law and I have not been able to agree. He wanted to make a doctor of me, whilst I only cared about writing. So, in order to avoid the continual discussions which pained my mother, I preferred to leave the house and plough my own furrow without anyone's assistance. I had hard times, no money. The whole fortune belongs to that—to M. Jenkins. I had to earn my living somehow, and you know how difficult that is for fellows like ourselves, so-called well-educated. Imagine that, in spite of what is generally called a complete education, I have only been able to put my hand to this child's play for a living. I

used a few savings, my pocket-money, to buy my first photographic necessaries, and I have established myself far away, right at the other end of Paris, in order not to embarrass my parents. Between ourselves, I don't believe I shall ever make a fortune in photography. At first I had to rough it like the deuce——"

Whilst André was thus good-humouredly relating the hardships of his life, Paul remembered Felicia's attack on Jenkins *à propos* of Bohemians, and all she said about those courageous enthusiasts, greedy of privations and trials. He thought, too, of Aline's passion for her dear Paris, which he himself only knew in its unwholesome eccentricities, though the great town hid in its folds so much of unknown heroism and noble illusions. That impression he had already felt in the shelter of the big lamp of the Joyeuses, he perhaps felt more keenly in this less warm, less tranquil *milieu*, to which art added its desperate or glorious uncertainty; and he listened, touched at heart, to André Maranne talking about Élise, about the examination she took so long to pass, the difficulties of photography, all the hazards of his life, which would assuredly cease "when he got 'Révolte' played," a lovable smile on the poet's lips accompanying the hope he so often expressed, and which he hastened to mock at himself, as if to deprive others of the right of doing so.

CHAPTER IX

In Honour of the Bey

In the south of France, where civilisation dates far back, historical castles that are still standing are rare. Here and there, at long intervals, is some ancient abbey on the slope of a hill, showing its tremulous, dismembered façade, pierced with holes that were windows, and whose openings only gaze up at the sky, a monument of dust calcined by the sun, going back to the period of the Crusades or the Courts of Love, without a human trace among its rocks, where neither ivy nor acanthus clings any longer, but which dry lavender still embalms. Amid all these ruins, the Château of Saint-Romans is a famous exception. If you have travelled in the south you have seen it, and you are soon going to see it again. It is between Valence and Montélimart, on a site where the railroad runs along the Rhône, at the foot of the fertile hills of Beaume, Raucoule, Mercurol, the whole Ermitage wine-region stretching over five leagues of close-packed rows of vines, the plantations of which look like sheep to the eyes, fall down into the river, which at that spot is green and full of isles, like the Rhine about Basle, but lit up by the sun as the Rhine never was.

Saint-Romans de Bellaigue is celebrated in the whole Rhône valley as a fairy palace; and its oasis of verdure and fine waterfall is indeed a true fairyland in those regions burnt up by the mistral.

"When I am rich, mama," said Jansoulet when quite a boy to his adoring mother, "I shall present you with Saint-Romans de Bellaigue as a gift."

And, as that man's life seemed the accomplishment of one of the Arabian Nights' tales, and all his desires, even the most extravagant, were realised, he had bought Saint-Romans, and offered it to his mother, newly furnished and splendidly restored. Although ten years had passed since, the worthy woman had not yet assimilated herself to her magnificent dwelling. "You have given me a white elephant, my poor Bernard," she wrote to her son; "I shall never dare to live there." And, indeed, she never did live there, but in the steward's house– a pavilion of modern construction, quite at the end of the property, convenient for superintending the farm, the sheep-folds, and the oil-mills, with their rural horizon of stacks of wheat, olive-trees, and vines, extending on the plateau as far as you could see. Every morning, in spite of her seventy years, she reckoned up accurately the whole wealth of the estate, uneasy, until she was certain nobody, during the night, had run off with the statues or vases, rooted up the immemorial quincunces, muddied the springs that fell into their echoing basins. Even the burning mid-day sun did not deter the old woman from continuing her round of inspection. About noon, too, another walker made his appearance in the park, less active, less noisy, dragging himself along rather than walking, leaning against walls, balustrades, a poor, bent creature, with a lifeless face,

who never spoke, and, when he was tired, uttered a plaintive cry to the servant who was always near him, who helped him to sit, to crouch on some step, where he would remain for hours, motionless and dumb, with mouth open and blinking eyes, soothed by the monotonous sounds of the *cigales*—a blot of humanity on the magnificent horizon.

This was Bernard's eldest brother, the beloved son of the father and mother, the beauty, the intelligence, the glorious hope of the nail-seller's family, who, like so many others in the south, loyal to the superstition of primogeniture, had sacrificed everything to send the handsome, ambitious youth to Paris, whither he went with four or five Marshal's bâtons in his knapsack, the admiration of all the girls of the village. Paris, after having, for ten years, beaten, twisted, pressed in its huge vat that brilliant southern chiffon, after having burnt it in all its vitriols, rolled it in all its mire, at last sent him back a rag and waif, dulled, paralysed, after having killed his father with worry, and obliged his mother to sell up her home, and to gain a living by charing in the well-to-do houses of the district. Happily, at the time when this débris of Parisian hospitals, repatriated at the public cost arrived at Bourg-Saint-Audéol, Bernard was already at Tunis, making a fortune, and regularly sending money home. What pangs it cost the poor mother to owe everything, even the life, the comfort of the unfortunate invalid, to the robust and courageous boy, whom his father and herself had always loved without tenderness, whom, from the age of five, they had been used to treat as a labourer, because he was very strong, curly-headed, and ugly, and already understood better than anybody in the house how to trade in old nails.

Ah! how she wished she had him, her Cadet, near her, to return him a little of all the good he had done, pay him, in due time, those arrears of maternal affection and caresses which she owed him. Knowing now that Bernard was in France for several months, perhaps for ever, she hoped to have him all to herself. And lo and behold! he arrived one fine evening, surrounded with official display, enveloped in a crowd of counts, marquises, fine gentlemen from Paris, who, with their servants, filled the two large brakes she had sent to await them at the small station of Giffas.

In fact, the Nabob had lately lent fifteen millions in hard cash to the Bey of Tunis—a slap at the Hemerlingues who were doing their best to bring about a quarrel between the two. Colonel Brahim arranged the little affair. The Bey, who was short of money, felt, of course, that it was very kind of the Nabob to be so ready to oblige him, and so, through Brahim, he sent a letter of thanks, and a message that, on his next trip to Vichy, he would stay two days with him at his beautiful Château of Saint-Romans, where the late Bey once honoured him with a visit. The Hemerlingues were mad at the Nabob's stroke—they who had worked so hard, the son in Tunis, the father in Paris, to ruin him in the prince's mind. No wonder the Nabob appeared glorious and triumphant.

"But kiss me, dear mama. There is no shame in pressing your boy close to your heart, whom you have not seen for years. Besides, all these gentlemen are our friends. Here is the Marquis de Monpavon, the Marquis de Bois-Landry. Ah! this is not like the time when I used to bring home little Cabassu and Jean Baptiste Bompain to eat bean-soup with us. You know M. de Géry? With my old friend

Cardailhac, whom I now introduce, you have my first batch. But others are coming. Get ready for a terrible upset. We shall receive the Bey in four days."

"The Bey!" said the old woman in a fright. "I thought he was dead."

Jansoulet and his guests could not help laughing at her comical terror, accentuated by the southern twang.

"But it's a new one, mama. There are always Beys. Luckily, by Jove! But don't be afraid. You won't have much trouble. My friend Cardailhac has undertaken the organisation. We shall have superb fêtes. Meanwhile, quick with the dinner and the rooms. Our Parisians are done up."

"It's all ready, my son," said the old woman simply, stiff and straight in her *cambrésine*, her cap with yellowed ribbons, which she never left off even on big festal occasions. Fortune had not changed her; she was a peasant of the Rhône valley, proud and independent, without any of the tricky humilities of the rustics depicted by Balzac; too simple, too, to be overweening because of her wealth. She had one pride—to show her son with what meticulous care she had fulfilled her functions as caretaker. Not an atom of dust, not a wet stain on the walls. So beautiful, so grand, indeed, was the frame, the general look of the Château, with its windows wide open on the majestic terrace, that the gaudy, tasteless luxuriousness of the rooms melted away, unseen even by the subtlest eyes.

"We have something to work upon here," said the manager Cardailhac, his glass at his eye, his hat aslope, already making up his *mise en scène*.

And the haughty demeanour of Monpavon, whom

the old woman's cap, as she received them on the threshold, had at first shocked, gave way to a condescending smile. There was certainly something to be done, and, guided by persons of taste, their friend Jansoulet could give his Maugrabine Highness a very fitting reception. That was what they talked about, and nothing else, the whole evening. Elbows on the table, in the sumptuous dining-room, warmed with wine, they planned, discussed. Cardailhac, who saw things on a large scale, already had his whole plan ready.

"To begin with, Nabob, *carte blanche*?"

"*Carte blanche*, old boy. And let fat Hemerlingue burst with envy and jealousy."

Then the manager mentioned his plans. The fête was to be divided into days, as at Vaux, when Fouquet received Louis XIV.; one day, comedy; another, Provençal fêtes, farandoles, bull-fights, local bands; the third day—— And already, with his managerial mania, he was sketching out programmes, posters.

De Géry had left them early. He had gone for refuge to the old mama, who had known him quite young, both him and his brothers, in the humble parlour of the white-curtained pavilion. Paul talked gently with the handsome old woman, with regular and severe features, white hair massed liked the flax on her distaff, who sat upright on her chair, her flat bust wrapped in a small green shawl. He called her Françoise, she called him M. Paul; they were old friends. And guess about what they were talking? About her grandchildren, Bernard's three sons, whom she did not know, whom she would have liked so much to know.

Suddenly there was a heavy step on the stairs, and

a rough, gentle voice said, quite low: "It's me—don't move." And Jansoulet appeared. As everyone in the Château had gone to bed, and he knew his mother's habits, and that her lamp would be the last one alight in the house, he came to see her, to chat with her, to give her that true greeting of the heart which they had not been able to exchange before strangers. "Oh! stay, my dear Paul; we don't put ourselves on ceremony with you." And, becoming again a child in his mother's presence, he threw his whole big body on the ground at her feet, with a truly touching caressingness of word and gesture. She too was happy indeed to have him quite near, but, in spite of that, she felt not quite at her ease, considering him an all-powerful, extraordinary being, raising him in her simple mind to the height of an Olympian engirt with thunder and lightning, possessing omnipotence. She spoke to him, inquired if he was still content with his friends, his business, without at the same time venturing to address to him the question she had put to De Géry: "Why did you not bring my grandchildren with you?" But he was the first to speak about them:

"They are at school, mama—as soon as the holidays come, they will be sent you with Bompain. You remember Bompain? And you may keep them two long months. They will come to you to be told beautiful stories; they will fall asleep with their heads on your apron, there, like that——"

And himself laying his woolly head, heavy as an ingot, on the old woman's knees, remembering the good old evenings of his childhood, when he used to go to sleep there, if he was allowed, if the head of his eldest brother did not take up all the room; for the

first time since his return to France, he tasted a few minutes of a delicious repose, away from his noisy and artificial life, pressed against that old maternal heart which he heard beating as regularly as the pendulum of the ancient clock that stood in a corner of the room, in the great silence of night and of the country which one feels hovering over illimitable space.

Early next morning, the commotion began with the arrival of the comedians — an avalanche of caps, chignons, top-boots, short skirts, affected outcries, veils floating over the fresh paint on the faces; the women in a great majority, Cardailhac thinking that the main thing for a Bey was to make false voices issue from pretty mouths, to display beautiful arms, well-turned legs, in the free-and-easy undress of operetta. So, all the plastic celebrities of his theatre were there—Amy Férat at their head, a creature who had already tried her teeth in the gold of several crowns; then, two or three famous grimacers, whose dull faces, amid the green of the quincunces, made the same chalky, spectral spots as the plaster of the statues. All these persons, excited by the journey, the fresh air, the boundless hospitality, as well as the hope of hooking something during the visit of Beys, Nabobs, and other carriers of sequins, wanted nothing better than to brisk about, amuse themselves and sing with the vulgar heartiness of a crowd of Seine boatmen, when they come ashore.

But Cardailhac viewed it in another way. As soon as they had arrived, washed, and taken breakfast, he hurried them into the rehearsal of their parts. There was no time to lose. The rehearsals took place in the little room near the summer gallery, where they were already beginning to build the theatre; and the noise

of hammers, the tunes of couplets being rehearsed, the shrill voices accompanied by the conductor's violin, mingled with the loud trumpet blasts of the peacocks on their perches.

Sitting in the middle of the porch, as if in front of his theatre, Cardailhac, whilst superintending rehearsals, gave orders to a tribe of workmen, gardeners, had trees felled that interfered with the view, designed the form of the triumphal arches, sent despatches, messengers, to mayors, to sub-prefects, to Arles, in order to have a deputation of country-girls in national costume, to Barbantane, where the handsomest farandoleurs are, to Faraman, renowned for its *manades* of wild bulls and Camarguese horses; and as Jansoulet's name flamed at the bottom of every missive, together with that of the Bey of Tunis, everything that could be done was eagerly done—the telegraphic wires did not stop working, messengers rode their horses to death on the roads, and this species of Porte-Saint-Martin Sardanapalus called Cardailhac kept on repeating: "There's something to be done with it."

Relieved of her duties, the old mama hardly appeared any more, busied herself solely with her farm and her invalid. In the evening, she no longer had her son with her, he was obliged to remain with his guests, whose number increased as the fêtes drew nigh.

At last the day came—the famous day of which the country folk even now speak. About three o'clock in the afternoon, after a sumptuous lunch, this time presided over by the old mother, with a new cap and ribbons, and at which were seated, by the side of Parisian celebrities, prefects, deputies, all in full dress,

swords by their sides, scarved mayors, worthy curés, freshly-shaven, Jansoulet, in evening dress and white tie, surrounded by his guests, came out on the perron, and beheld in the splendid frame of the superb landscape, flags, triumphal arches, crowded masses of heads, flamboyant costumes terraced on the slopes of the hills, in the paths of the avenues, beautiful girls from Arles, farandoleurs of Barbantane, orpheonists, black bulls and Carmaguese gauchos on their small, white-maned horses, helmets, bayonets, pontoniers, the immense crowd, composed of whole villages pouring down from every hill, and gathering on the Giffas Road, amid shouts and dust. As he gazed at the wondrous scene, in which all the gold in his coffers glittered, the Nabob was moved to admiration and pride.

"It is beautiful," said he, growing pale, and, behind him, his mother, also pale, murmured in unutterable fear:

"It is too beautiful for a man—one would say it was God who is coming."

Amid the touching congratulations that were showered on Jansoulet, Cardailhac, triumphant and perspiring, who had not been seen since the morning, suddenly appeared:

"Did not I say that I should be able to do something! Eh?—is it chic? . . . There's a spectacle—I fancy our Parisians would pay a large price to see a first performance like that."

And, lowering his voice because of the mother who was quite near:

"You have seen our Arlesians? No; look closer at them—the first one, she who is in front, to offer the bouquet."

"Why, it's Amy Férat."

"Well, you know, my dear fellow, that if the Bey drops his handkerchief among those pretty girls, there must be at least one to pick it up. The other, innocent things, would not understand Oh! I have thought of everything, you will see. It's all got up as at the theatre. One side farm, the other garden"

The carriages were now drawing up, gala coaches that had been used for the fêtes of the late Bey, two big chariots, pink and gold in Tunisian fashion, which mother Jansoulet had tended like saintly relics and which left the stables with their painted panels, their gold hangings and fringes, as bright, as new, as on their first day

The Nabob, Monpavon, the prefect, and one of the generals got into the first coach, the others in the second, and in ordinary carriages. The weather was superb, but hot and heavy, three months in advance of the season, as often happens in those impetuous regions in which everything hurries, where everything comes before its time. Though there was not a cloud to be seen, the closeness of the air—the wind had just fallen suddenly, like a furled sail, whilst the atmosphere was white with heat, and a silent solemnity hung over the scene—everything announced the brewing of a storm in some corner of the horizon.

"Open the door on your side, General; it's stifling," said Monpavon, crimson of countenance, fearing for his paint.

One more triumphal arch. It was Giffas, and its long, stony street, strewn with green palms, its old houses carpeted with flowers and tapestry. Outside the village, the white, square station, placed like a die

at the edge of the line, a true type of a small rural station lost among vines, with never anybody in its one waiting-room, sometimes an old woman with parcels, waiting in a corner, who has come three hours ahead.

In honour of the Bey, the light building had been smothered in flags and trophies, adorned with carpets and divans, and provided with a splendid buffet and sherbets, all ready for His Highness. Once there, the Nabob felt himself relieved of that sort of restless uneasiness which, without knowing why, he had experienced a moment before. All at once the electric bell rang. The station-master in his best suit ran up on the line. "Gentlemen, the train is signalled. It will be here in eight minutes" Everybody quivers. Then an identical instinct caused them all to draw out their watches. Six minutes more. Then, in the deep silence, someone says: "Look there." On the right, in the direction from which the train was to come, two high hills, covered with vines, formed a funnel in which the line plunged, disappeared, as if swallowed up. Just then all that background was black as ink, darkened by an enormous cloud, a gloomy bar cutting through the blue of the sky. Amid the solemnity of the deserted line, on that silent line of rails, along which were crowded rows of people waiting for His Highness to pass, the aërial cliff was terrifying as it advanced, projecting its shadow before it, with a trickery of perspective that gave the cloud a slow, majestic movement, and to its shadow the swiftness of a galloping horse. "What a storm in a moment!" was the general thought; but they had no time to express it, for a screeching whistle sounded, and the train

appeared at the bottom of the dark funnel. A regular royal train, quick and short, decked with French and Tunisian flags, whose groaning and smoking engine, an enormous bouquet of roses on its breast-plate, looked like the maid of honour of a wedding between Leviathans.

Going at full speed, it slackened down as it drew near. The functionaries grouped themselves, drawing themselves up, making sure of their swords, adjusting their collars, whilst Jansoulet went to meet the train along the line, an obsequious smile on his lips, and his back already rounded for the *Salem alek*. The train was moving very slowly. Jansoulet believed it was stopping, and put his hand on the door of the royal carriage, which glittered with gold beneath the black of the sky; but, doubtless, the impetus was too strong, the train kept going on, the Nabob walking by its side, trying, with one hand, to open the accursed door which remained shut, and, with the other hand, signalling a command to the engine. The engine did not obey. "Stop!" It did not stop. He leapt impatiently on the velvet-covered steps, and with that rather impudent impetuosity of his, which the late Bey liked so much, he cried, putting his big, woolly head into the carriage:

"Saint-Romans Station, your Highness."

You know that kind of vague light there is in a dream, that discoloured and empty atmosphere, in which everything takes the aspect of a phantom. Jansoulet was suddenly enveloped, gripped, paralysed by it. He wanted to speak, the words would not come; his nerveless hands held on to their support so feebly that he nearly fell backwards.

What had he seen? Half-lying on an ottoman,

Resting on his elbow his handsome, flat-toned head, with its long, silky, black beard, the Bey, buttoned up to his neck in his Oriental jacket, without any ornaments but the broad ribbon of the Legion of Honour across his chest, and a diamond aigrette on his cap, was impassively fanning himself with a small plait of esparto grass embroidered with gold. Two aides-de-camp were standing near him, as also an engineer of the company. Facing him, on another ottoman, in a respectful, but favoured attitude, since they were the only ones seated in the Bey's presence, were the Hemerlingues, father and son, both yellow, their long whiskers falling on their white ties, two owls, one fat, the other lean. They had reconquered his Highness, and were bringing him to Paris in triumph. Horrible dream! All those people, who knew Jansoulet quite well, looked at him coldly, as if his face did not remind them of anything. . . . Piteously white, sweat on his forehead, he stuttered: "But your Highness is not alighting . . ." A livid flash of lightning, like a sabre-stroke, followed by a fearful clap of thunder, cut short his speech. But the light that shone in the eyes of the sovereign seemed to him terrible in another way. Rising upright, his arm extended, in a rather guttural voice, accustomed to roll the hard Arabic syllables, but in very pure French, the Bey pulverised him by the slow, studied words:

"Go back home, Mercanti. The foot goes where the heart leads; mine will never go to the house of the man who has plundered my country."

Jansoulet wished to speak. The Bey made a sign: "Go!" And the engineer, having pressed an electric button, which was answered by a whistle, the train, which had not stopped its slow movement, stretched

its iron muscles and creaked, and dashed on, full steam, waving its flags in the storm-wind, among whirls of black smoke and sinister lightning.

Jansoulet, standing on the line, staggering, dazed, a lost man, gazed at the flight and vanishing of his fortune, insensible to the large drops of rain that began to fall on his bare head. Then, when the others, rushing up to him, surrounded him, plied him with questions: "So the Bey is not going to stop here?" he murmured some incoherent words: "Court intrigues Infamous plotting" And, suddenly shaking his fist at the receding train, his eyes bloodshot, the foam of wrath on his lips, he shouted, with the roar of a wild beast:

"D——d scoundrels!"

"Form, Jansoulet, form——"

You may divine who said that and who, passing his arm under the Nabob's, tried to pull him together, to make him swell out his chest like his own, led him to the coaches amid the stupor of embroidered coats, and got him into one, annihilated, dazed, like the relation of a dead person who is hoisted into a mourning carriage after the lugubrious ceremony. Rain began to fall, thunderclaps followed. They all entered the carriages pell-mell, and quickly started on the return journey. Then a heart-rending and comical thing happened, one of those cruel farces played by cowardly fate when crushing its victims. In the dim light of waning day, in the growing darkness of the tempest, the crowd pressing round the station thought they distinguished a Highness among the many uniforms, and, as soon as the wheels moved, an immense shout, a fearful clamour, pent up for an hour in all their throats, burst forth, rose up, rolled, rebounded

hill to hill, continued in the valley: "Long live the Bey!"

Warned by the signal, the first fanfares struck up, the orpheons followed, and, the noise extending from Giffas to Saint-Romans, the road became a billow, an uninterrupted uproar. It was no good of Cardailhac, the other gentlemen, or even Jansoulet, to lean out of the windows, to make desperate signs: "Stop! Stop!" Their gestures were lost in the tumult, the dark; what was seen appeared to be an incitement to shout louder. The crowd became more and more excited, raised their hands, waved their hats, their emotions enhanced by their own gestures. Women in tears wiped their eyes, all at once, from the top of an elm, a shrill child's voice cried: "Mama, mama, there he is — mama, mama, I see him." He saw him! Why, everybody saw him; everybody would swear they saw him.

In the presence of such a delirium, as it was impossible to silence and quiet the mob, the carriage people could only do one thing: let things take their course, raise the windows and gallop back in order to shorten this cruel martyrdom. Then matters became terrible. Seeing the cortège rush off, all the spectators started rushing with it. To the muffled sound of their tambourines, the Barbantane farandoleurs bounded, hand in hand, going, coming, a human garland, around the carriage-doors. The orpheonists, pumped out by singing at a running pace, but howling all the same, dragged along their banner-bearers, with their banners thrown over their shoulders; and the good, fat, red, panting curés, pushing in front of them their vast overtaxed bellies, yet found strength to cry into the ears of the horses, in sympathetic tones, full of gush: "Long live our Bey!"

The rain poured upon it all in buckets, in sheets, washing the paint off the pink coaches, making confusion worse confounded, giving this triumph return the look of a rout, but a comical rout, blent with songs, laughter, blasphemies, furious embraces and diabolical oaths.

A dull, soft rolling told the poor Nabob, motionless and silent in a corner of his coach, that they were crossing the bridge of boats. They were near the end.

"At last!" he said, looking through the dripping glass at the foamy billows of the Rhône, the tempestuousness of which seemed a rest to him after what he had just gone through. But at the end of the bridge, when the first carriage reached the triumphal arch, rockets burst, drums beat, in honour of the monarch's entry on the estate of his servant; and, as the crown of irony, in the twilight, at the top of the Château, a gigantic gas flame suddenly illuminated the roof with letters of fire, in which the rain, the wind made big shadows, but which still showed very legibly the letters: "Viv-L-B-YM-HMED!"

"Ah! that 'takes the bun'!" said the poor Nabob, who could not help laughing—a very piteous, bitter laugh. But no, he was mistaken. The crowning blow awaited him at the door of the Château, and it was dealt by Amy Férat, who, coming out of the group of Arlesian girls, came to present him with a bouquet. Her flowers in her hand, shyly, with lowered eyes and roguish calf, the pretty actress rushed to the door in a bowing, almost kneeling pose, which she had been rehearsing for a week. Instead of the Bey, Jansoulet stepped out, stiff, agitated, passed by without even seeing her. And, as she remained there, her

bouquet in her hand, with the stupid look of abortive fairydom :

"Take away your flowers, dear ; your affair has not come off," said Cardailhac, chaffing like a Parisian who soon makes up his mind what part to take. "The Bey is not coming—he had forgotten his pocket-handkerchief."

And now it is night. Every one is sleeping at Saint-Romans after the tremendous uproar of the day. Torrents of rain are falling. Alone in his sumptuous room, with its lordly bed, over which spread purple-bordered lampas curtains, the Nabob is still awake, strides to and fro, chewing sinister thoughts. It is no longer his recent affront that preoccupies him—the public outrage in the presence of 30,000 persons ; nor is it the deadly insult addressed him by the Bey in the presence of his mortal enemies. What frightens him is what he imagines to lie behind the affront. He remembers that all his property is in Tunis—houses, offices, ships—at the Bey's mercy, in the lawless, despotic East. And, glueing his burning forehead to the dripping panes, his back sweating, his hands cold, he remains gazing vaguely into the night, which is as dark, as impenetrable as his own fate.

Suddenly, a sound of steps, hurried knocks at the door.

"Who is there ?"

"Monsieur," says Noel, his servant, coming in half-dressed, "a very urgent telegram sent from the telegraph office by messenger."

"A telegram !—what's up now ?"

He takes the blue envelope, and opens it tremblingly. The god, already twice smitten, begins to feel vulnerable, to lose self-confidence ; he knows the fears,

the nervous weaknesses of other men. Quick! the signature!—MORA!—Is it possible?—The Duke, the Duke, to him!—Yes, it's so—M-O-R-A——

And below:

"*Popolasca is dead. Immediate election in Corsica. You are official candidate.*"

Deputy!—it meant salvation As deputy, nothing to fear. A representative of the great French nation is not treated as a simple mercanti. Dished the Hemerlingues.

"Oh, my Duke, my noble Duke!"

He was so agitated he could not sign. And suddenly:

"Where's the man who brought the telegram?"

"Here, M. Jansoulet," answered in the corridor a good, southern, familiar voice.

He was in luck, was the bearer.

"Come in," said the Nabob

And, giving him his receipt, he pulled out of his ever-full pockets as many pieces of gold as his two hands could contain, and threw them into the cap of the poor devil who stood gaping, bewildered, dazzled by that surprise of fortune in the night of the fairy palace.

CHAPTER X

A Corsican Election

Pozzonegro, near Sartène.

"At last I am able to write a few brief lines to you, my dear Monsieur Joyeuse. During the five days we have been in Corsica, we have had to run about so much, speak so much, written so many letters, endorsed so many petitions, visited so many schools; in fact, what with laying foundation-stones, wine-drinking and eating cream-cheese, I have not found time to send an affectionate greeting to the little family circle around the big table, whence I have been away for a fortnight now. Luckily, my absence will not last much longer, as we reckon on leaving here the day after to-morrow and returning to Paris without a break.

"So far as the election is concerned, I think our journey has been a success. But to the question, What truth is there in the fabulous works, undertaken by the *Caisse Territoriale*, I have unfortunately to answer,—None whatever. It is an absolute swindle. There are mines that don't flourish, and never will flourish, because they only exist on paper; quarries that know not yet either pick-axe or powder; uncultivated sandy landes. It's the same with the

forests; a whole wooded side of Monte Rotondo belongs to us, it seems, but axes can't be used on the trees, unless aeronauts were to act as wood-cutters. The same with the watering-places, among which this wretched village of Pozzonegro is one of the most important, with its fountain whose astonishing ferruginous properties are celebrated by Paganetti. The steam-boats are non-existent. As for railways, I noticed that all these worthy Corsicans used to smile maliciously when I spoke about them; they answered with winks of the eyes, mysterious allusions. I have since discovered that the secret police are known here by the name of 'railways.'

"In fact, the whole assets of the *Caisse Territoriale* consist in a few planks and two ancient huts. What, then, has become of the huge sums laid out by M. Jansoulet during the last five months, without reckoning what has come from the outside public, who have been attracted by his magic name? As soon as we return, I shall bring to the Nabob's notice all the details of my long inquiry, and, willy-nilly, I shall drag him out of that den of thieves. A hurried good-bye, my dear Monsieur Joyeuse; remember me to the young ladies, and let them keep for me quite a tiny place around the work-table.—PAUL DE GÉRY."

The house in the Place Vendôme was filled with its habitual frequenters from morning to night, enhanced by a constant arrival of little men brown as locust-beans, with regular, bearded faces, some turbulent and chattering in the style of Paganetti, others silent, reserved, and dogmatic. All these hungry islanders from the interior of their wild country met at the Nabob's table, whose house had become an inn, a restaurant, a market-place.

You may imagine that the cheque-book was not spared by that flock of voracious swallows that had settled in Jansoulet's salons. Nothing could be more comical than the haughty fashion in which the worthy islanders negotiated their loans, abruptly and defiantly. Yet they were not the most terrible, except for the cigar-boxes, which were engulfed in their pockets so that you might believe they all wanted to open cigar-shops on their return home. The election had given rise to an amazing recrudescence of organised pillaging in the house.

Bad reports about Jansoulet's position, too, although still vague, had circulated on the Stock Exchange. Was it a manœuvre of his enemy Hemerlingue, against whom Jansoulet was waging a merciless money-war, trying to counter all his financial operations, and losing very large sums in the game, because he had against him his own fury, the *sang-froid* of his adversary, and the blunders of Paganetti, who was his man of straw? At any rate, the golden star had paled. Paul de Géry knew it from Joyeuse, who had entered a stock-broker's office as clerk, and was very well up in Bourse matters; but what particularly frightened him was the Nabob's singular agitation, his need for deadening his senses following on his former beautiful, strong serenity, and the loss of his southern sobriety, the way in which he excited himself before meals with great draughts of raki, speaking loud, laughing loud, like a big sailor on the spree. You felt he was a man who was overstraining in order to escape a preoccupation, which could nevertheless be seen in the sudden contraction of all the muscles of his face as the importunate thought recurred, or when he was feverishly turning over the leaves of his small ungilt portfolio. The serious

talk, the decisive explanation, which Paul so much wished to have with him, Jansoulet did not want at any price. He passed his nights at the club, his mornings in bed, and, as soon as he awoke, had his room full of people, who spoke whilst he dressed, and to whom he replied with his nose in the basin. When, by a miracle, De Géry caught hold of him for a second, he fled, cut him short with a: "Not now, please." Finally, the young man had recourse to heroic means.

One morning, about five o'clock, Jansoulet, returning from the club, found on his table, near his bed, a note. It was signed "Paul de Géry"; it was frank and open, and breathed of the loyalty and serious youth of the writer. De Géry clearly informed him of all the infamies, all the exploitations, whose victim he was. Without mincing matters, he gave the rascals their names. De Géry had made a long, detailed memorandum, with proofs in support, regarding Bois-Landry, Schwalbach, Moessard, and the rest; but it was the dossier of the *Caisse Territoriale* to which he especially directed Jansoulet's attention, as constituting the real danger of his situation. In the other matters, only money was risked; in that instance, honour was at stake. Allured by the Nabob's name, his title of Chairman of the Board, into that disgraceful trap, hundreds had taken shares, seeking gold in the wake of the lucky miner.

"You will find the report I mention," said Paul de Géry, at the end of his letter, "in the first drawer of my desk. There are also various receipts. I did not lay it about in your room, because I distrust Noël as much as the rest. This evening, when I leave, I shall give you back the key. For I am going away, my dear benefactor and friend, I am going away, full of

gratitude for the good you have done me, and heart-broken that your blind trustingness prevents me from partially requiting you. At this moment, my conscience, as an honest man, would rebuke me if I remained longer useless at my post. I am witnessing a disaster, the sack of a summer-palace, against which I can do nothing; but my heart revolts against what I see. I shake hands that dishonour me by their contact. I am your friend, and I appear their accomplice. And who knows whether, through living in such an atmosphere, I might not become so?"

This letter, which the Nabob read slowly, deeply, even to the white of the lines and the spaces between the words, made so lively an impression on him, that, instead of going to bed, he went at once to his young secretary's room. When he entered, De Géry had already risen, and was standing before his open desk, in which he was classifying some papers.

"First and foremost, my friend," said Jansoulet, gently closing the door on their conversation, "answer me this frankly: Is it for the motives expressed in your letter that you have made up your mind to leave me? Is there not underneath it some one of those slanders which I know are circulating against me in Paris? You would, I am sure, be loyal enough to inform me and put me in a position—to clear myself before you."

Paul assured him he had no other reasons for leaving, but that those were quite sufficient, since they involved a matter of conscience.

"Then, my boy, listen to me, and I am sure of keeping you with me. Your letter, so eloquent in its honesty, sincerity, has taught me nothing of which I was not convinced three months ago. Yes, my

dear Paul, it is you who were right; Paris is more complex than I thought. I needed, when I arrived here, an honest and disinterested cicerone, who would put me on guard against people and things. I found only exploiters. All the scoundrels of the town have wiped the mud of their boots on my carpets. My poor rooms badly need a good sweeping; and they shall have it, by God! But I must first be a deputy. All these rascals are of use in my election; and the election is too necessary to allow me to lose the smallest chance.

"In two words, here is the situation. Not only does the Bey not intend to repay me the money I lent him a month ago; but, on my demand, he replied by a counter-claim for eighty millions,—the sum at which he reckons the money I am supposed to have taken from his brother. That is an abominable slander. My fortune is my own in every sense. I made it as commission agent. I had Ahmed's favour; he himself furnished me with the opportunity of becoming wealthy. That I sometimes turned the screw a bit hard is quite possible. But you must not judge the thing with European eyes. The enormous profit made by the Levantines is well known and an accepted fact in Tunis: it is the tribute-money of savages, whom we initiate into western comforts. That scoundrel Hemerlingue, who is suggesting to the Bey this persecution of me, has been a persecutor in many other ways. But what is the use of discussing? I am in the wolf's jaws. Whilst awaiting my explanation before his tribunals—I know all about Eastern justice—the Bey has begun by putting an embargo on all my goods, ships, palaces, and everything they contain. If I am a deputy, all that is a mere trifle. I

shall have my property back with all kinds of excuses. If I am not elected, I lose everything, sixty, eighty millions, even the possibility of making another pile; it spells ruin, dishonour, the abyss.

"Come, sonnie, are you going to desert me at such a crisis? Remember I have only you in the whole world. My wife?—you have seen her, you know what a support, what an adviser she is for her husband. My children?—it is as if I had none. I never see them; they would hardly recognise me in the street. I have only my mother, who is far off, to love me, and you, who come to me from my mother—— No, you will not leave me alone amid all the calumnies that are creeping around me. It is terrible if you knew. At the club, at the theatre, everywhere I go, I perceive the Baroness Hemerlingue's small viper's head, I hear the echo of her hissings, I feel the venom of her rage. Everywhere, mocking looks, conversations interrupted when I approach, smiles that lie, or goodwill in which a little pity is mingled. And then desertions—people who scatter as at the approach of a misfortune.

"For example, there is Felicia Ruys, who, at the moment of finishing my bust, makes a pretext of Heaven knows what accident so as not to send it to the Salon. I said nothing; I looked as if I believed her. But I understood that in her case, too, some calumny had been at work—and it is a very serious disappointment for me. In such grave crises as that through which I am going everything has its importance. My bust, displayed at the Exhibition and signed by her famous name, would have been of much use to me in Paris. But no, everything is cracking, everything is failing me. You see now that you may not fail me."

CHAPTER XI

A Day of Spleen

Five o'clock in the afternoon. Rain since the morning, a grey sky, low enough almost to touch with an umbrella. Soft, clammy weather. Slush, mud, nothing but mud in dense puddles, in shiny streaks at the edge of the pavements, vainly swept up by machines. A piteous sight. There is, however, one person whom the spectacle delights—a poor, disgusted, sick being, who, stretched at full length on the embroidered silk of a divan, her head on her closed fists, looks out gleefully through the dripping panes, and rejoices in all the ugliness of the scene:

"Do you see, my fairy, that's just the weather I wanted to-day—look at them wading. Are they not hideously dirty? What filth! There is some everywhere, in the streets, on the quays, even in the Seine, even in the sky. Ah! mud is good when you are sad. I should like to paddle in it, sculpture with it a statue one hundred feet high, to be called 'My Ennui.'"

Only the worthy Jenkins can endure her when in such moods. He even seems to like them, as if he expected something from them. Yet, God knows, she is not amiable with him. Only yesterday he

remained two hours with the beautiful ennuyée, who did not speak to him once. If that is the kind of welcome in reserve for the great personage who is about to do them the honour of coming to dine with them this evening—— Here the gentle Crenmitz, who is quietly digesting all those ideas whilst gazing at the slender tip of her rosetted shoes, suddenly remembers that she has promised to prepare a dish of Viennese confectionery for the dinner of the personage in question, and discreetly leaves the studio on the point of her small feet.

It still rains, it is still muddy, the beautiful sphinx is still lying there, her eyes lost in the muddy horizon. Somebody has just entered the studio with a heavier step than Constance's mouse-trot. The small servant, no doubt. And Felicia, roughly, without turning:

"Go to bed! I am not in for anyone."

"Still, I should much have liked to speak to you," replies a friendly voice.

She starts, sits up, and in softened tones, almost laughing, she says to her unexpected visitor:

"Dear me! it's you, young Minerva. How did you get in?"

"Very easily. All the doors are open."

"That does not astonish me. Constance is like mad, since this morning, with her dinner."

"Yes, I saw. The ante-room is full of flowers. You expect——?"

"Oh! a stupid dinner, an official dinner. I don't know how I could—— Sit down there; near me. I am happy to see you."

Paul sits down, rather agitated. She had never seemed to him so beautiful. In the half-light of the studio, amid the confused splendour of objects of

art, bronzes, tapestries, her paleness makes a soft light, her eyes have the glitter of precious stones, and her long, close-fitting riding-habit outlines the abandon of her goddess-like body. Then she speaks in so affectionate a tone; she seems so happy at Paul's visit. Why did he remain away so long? It's nearly a month since she saw him. Are they no longer friends? He apologises as best he can. Business, a journey. Besides, if he did not come, he has often spoken of her, oh! how often! almost every day.

"Really? And with whom?"

"With——"

He is about to say: "with Aline Joyeuse"; but a sense of embarrassment stops him—an indefinable feeling, a kind of shame to pronounce the name in the studio which has heard so many others. There are things that do not go together without one clearly knowing why. Paul prefers to answer by a lie that brings him straight to the purpose of his visit:

"With an excellent person whom you have pained without cause. Now, why did you not finish the bust of the poor Nabob? It would have been a great happiness, a great pride for him to have had that bust at the Exhibition. He reckoned on it."

At the Nabob's name she was slightly confused:

"It's true," she said, "I broke my word. I am so capricious. But I certainly desire to resume it one of these days. Look, the linen is over it, all wet, so that the clay does not dry."

"And the accident? Oh! you know, we never believed in it."

"You were wrong. I never lie. A fall, a dreadful plump. But the clay was fresh. I easily repaired it. Look!"

She removed the linen with a movement of her hand; the Nabob appeared with his kindly face, all happy to be portrayed, and so true to nature that Paul exclaimed with admiration.

"Isn't he good?" said she, naïvely. "Just a few retouches here and there—" (she had taken the boaster and the little sponge, and pushed the stand into the waning light). "It would be a matter of a few hours; but it could not go to the Exhibition, in spite of that. This is the 22nd; all the sculptures have been sent in long ago."

"Bah! with high influence."

She knitted her brows, and her mouth drooped, with its unpleasing expression:

"True! The protégée of the Duke de Mora. Oh! you need not defend yourself. I know what people say, and I despise them like that—" (she sent a pellet of clay, plastering itself on the tapestry). "Perhaps, even, by dint of supposing that which is not—— But let us leave such infamies alone," said she, raising her small, aristocratic head. "I want to give you a pleasure, Minerva. Your friend shall go to the Salon this year."

At that moment, a smell of caramel, of warm paste, invaded the studio into which fell the twilight in fine, discolouring dust; and the fairy appeared, a dish of fritters in her hand, a real fairy, adorned, rejuvenated, dressed in a white tunic that left bare, beneath the yellowed lace, the beautiful arms of the old woman —the arms, that beauty which dies the last.

"Look at my *Kuchlen*, darling; are they not a success this time? Oh! excuse me! I did not see you had company. Why, it's M. Paul!—Quite well, M. Paul? Try one of my cakes."

And the amiable old woman, to whom her toilette seemed to lend an extraordinary vivacity, came forward, skipping, her plate balanced on the tips of her doll's-fingers.

"Not now," said Felicia coolly. "You will offer him some at dinner."

"At dinner?"

The dancer was so stupefied that she nearly upset her fine, soufflée pastry, which was light and wholesome as her own self.

"But yes, I am going to keep him for dinner with us. Oh, I beg of you," she added with a particular emphasis, on seeing the young man's gesture of refusal, "I entreat you, don't say no to me. By remaining this evening you would be rendering me a real service. Come now, I at any rate did not hesitate just now."

She had taken his hand; and truly, you felt a strange disproportion between her request and the suppliant, anxious tone, in which it was made. Paul still held out. He was not dressed—— How could she? A dinner at which she had guests.

"My dinner? But I countermand it. That's how I am. We three shall be alone, with Constance."

"But, Felicia, my child, you don't think of—— Well!—— And the—the other who will soon be here."

"Well, I am going to write and tell him to stop at home!"

"My poor girl, it is too late."

"Not at all. It is just six. The dinner was for half-past seven. Let him have this quickly."

She wrote hurriedly, on a corner of a table.

"My gracious, what a strange creature!" murmured the dancer, quite bewildered, whilst Felicia, ravished with delight, transfigured, joyously closed her letter.

"There's my excuse. Headaches were not invented for Kadour."

She added, when the letter had been despatched:

"Oh! how happy I am! What a beautiful evening we shall have together—kiss me, Constance. It will not prevent us from doing honour to your *Kuchlen*, and we shall have the pleasure of seeing you in a pretty dress that will make you look younger than I."

This was more than sufficient to obtain forgiveness from the dancer for the caprice of her dear demon and the crime of *lèse-majesté* to which she had just been made an accomplice. To treat so high a personage so cavalierly! She alone in the world could do it; she alone! As for Paul de Géry, he no longer tried to resist, caught again by that fascination of which he may have thought he had rid himself by absence from his beloved, but which, as soon as he had crossed the threshold of the studio, vanquished his will, delivered him up, bound and conquered, to the feeling he had resolved to combat.

The dinner, which was truly fit for a prince, and had been superintended by the Austrian lady in its minutest details, had clearly been prepared for a guest of the highest rank. From the high, seven-branched chandelier in carved wood, which shone down upon the embroidered table-cloth, to the long-necked decanters of bizarre and exquisite shapes, the sumptuous service, the delicacy of the rarely piquant dishes, proved the importance of the expected guest, the care that had been taken to please him.

Paul felt uneasy. He wanted to know what privileged guest he was replacing, whom Felicia could treat at the same time with such magnificence and such complete *sans-façon*. In spite of everything, he felt the presence of the person as something offensive to his personal dignity. He would have liked to forget him, but everything called him to mind, even the dress of the good fairy who sat opposite him and still retained some of the grand airs with which she had armed herself beforehand for the solemn occasion. That thought troubled him, spoilt his joy in being there.

On the other hand, as happens in all duets in which the harmonies are very rare, he had never seen Felicia so affectionate, in such cheerful mood. It was an overflowing, almost childlike, mirth—one of those warm exuberances you experience when a danger is over. She laughed heartily, teased Paul about his accent, and what she called his bourgeois ideas. "For, you are a fearful bourgeois, you know—but that's what I like in you. Out of contrariness, no doubt, because I was born under a bridge, in a gust of wind, I have always liked orderly, sensible people."

"Oh! my dear, what is all this nonsense you are telling M. Paul about being born under a bridge?" said the good Crenmitz, who could not away with the exaggeration of certain images, and took everything literally.

"Let him believe what he pleases, my fairy. We are not thinking of him as a possible husband. I am sure he would not care to have for his wife such a monster as an artist. He would think he was marrying the devil. You are right, Minerva; art is a

despot. You have to yield yourself to it completely. You have to put all your ideal, energy, honesty, conscience in your work; so much so, that you have no more of them left for actual life, and, when you have finished your work, you fall through overstrain, without strength, and without compass, at the mercy of every wave, like a dismasted pontoon. A bride like that is a bad bargain!"

"And yet," the young man timidly hazarded, it seems to me that art, however exacting it may be, cannot entirely monopolise a woman. What would she do with her feelings of tenderness and affection, her need of loving, of self-sacrifice and devotion, which is in a woman much more than in us men the spring of all her acts?"

She thought a moment, dreamily, before answering.

"You are perhaps right, wise Minerva. The truth is, there are days when my life rings terribly hollow—I feel cavities, abysses in it. Everything vanishes that I throw into them to fill them up. My most beautiful artistic enthusiasms are engulfed in them and expire every time in a sigh. Then I think of marriage. A husband, children, a heap of children to rush about the studio, the nest to look after, the happiness of that physical activity which is lacking to our art-lives, regular occupations, alertness, singing, simple joys, which would force you to play instead of thinking in vacuum, in the darkness, to laugh at wounded self-love, to be nothing but a happy and contented mother on the day when the public discovers you to be worn out, exhausted, finished as an artist."

And, with that vision of tenderness and affection in her mind's eye, the young girl's beauty assumed an

expression Paul had never seen before, which cast a spell of utter enchantment over him, made him madly eager to carry off in his arms that lovely wild bird which dreamt of the dove-cot, to defend it, to shelter it in the assured love of an honourable man.

Without looking at him, she continued:

"I have not flown away so far as I seem to have, let me tell you. Ask my dear god-mother if, when she sent me to school, I did not behave well? But what a disorderliness afterwards came into my life. If you only knew what a youth I spent, what a precocious experience contaminated my mind, what a confusion there was in my head, as a little girl, between right and wrong, sanity and madness. Art alone, which was always being praised and discussed, remained stable and secure, and I took refuge in it. That is perhaps why I shall never be anything but an artist—a woman unlike the rest of her sex, a poor amazon with a heart held captive in its steel breast-plate, who has been launched into the fight like a man and condemned to live and to die as a man."

Why did he not then appeal to her?

"Beautiful warrior, lay down your arms, attire yourself again in the flowing robe and the graces of the gynæceum. I love you, I implore you, marry me, and be happy, and make me happy too."

Ah! there you are. He was afraid that the other, you know, the man who was to have come to dinner and who seemed to remain between them, in spite of his absence, should hear him utter the words and should have the right to jeer at him or pity him for his fine outburst.

"In any case, I take my oath to one thing," she went on; "namely, that if I ever have a daughter, I

shall try to make a true woman of her, and not a poor waif like myself. Oh! you know, my own fairy, I don't say that for you. You have always been good with your demon, full of care and affection. Look at her, how lovely she is to-night, how young she is."

As they looked at her, more than half asleep in her arm-chair after dinner

"Poor little fairy," said Felicia; "she is the best, the most serious friend, safeguard, and protection I have had in my life. That butterfly has been a godmother to me, indeed. Are you now astonished at the zigzags, the flights of my brain? Lucky I stopped where I have."

And, all at once, with an effusion full of delight and happiness:

"Oh! Minerva, Minerva, I am so happy you came to-night; but, mind, you must not again leave me so long alone. I badly need near me a mind as upright as yours, to see a true, genuine face amid the masks that surround me. A terrible bourgeois, nevertheless," she cried, laughing; "and a provincial into the bargain. But no matter! after all, it's you whom I am most pleased to behold.. And I fancy my sympathy is especially connected with one thing. You remind me of someone who was the great love of my youth, who was, like you, a serious and sensible little being, clinging to the actual facts of existence, but mingling with it that ideal which we artists set aside entirely for our works alone. Some things you say appear to come from her. You have the same classically-formed mouth. Is it that which makes your words so similar? I don't know, but you really positively resemble one another. You will see."

On the table at which she sat facing him, and

which was laden with sketches and albums, she began to draw, as she talked, her forehead bent, her curly, rather rebellious hair shading her adorable little head. She was no longer the beautiful, prostrate monster, of anxious and gloomy countenance, condemning her fate; but a woman, a true woman, who loves, and who desires to attract love This time Paul forgot all his mistrust in the presence of such sincerity and such loveliness. He was about to speak, to plead persuasively. It was a decisive moment. But the door opened, and the little servant appeared. The Duke had sent to inquire if Mademoiselle's headache was any better.

"No better and no worse," she said, in a temper.

When the servant went out, there was a moment of silence, an icy chill between them. Paul had risen. She went on with her sketch, her head still bent.

He walked a few steps in the studio; then, returning to the table, he asked gently, astounded to find himself so calm:

"So it was the Duke de Mora who was to have dined with you?"

"Yes—I was bored to death—a day of spleen. Days like that are bad for me."

"Was the Duchess coming too?"

"The Duchess?—No. I don't know her."

"Well, if I were you, I would never have a married man to dinner whose wife I did not know. You complain of being deserted; why do you desert yourself? When a woman is above reproach, she should guard against being suspected. Am I hurting you?"

"No, no; scold me, Minerva—I like your morality. It is straightforward and frank; it does not wink like

that of the Jenkins tribe. I have told you I have need of a guide."

And throwing to him the sketch she had just finished:

"There! that's the friend of whom I was telling you. A deep and assured affection which I was mad enough to lose, like the silly I am. In hours of difficulty, when there was a decision or some sacrifice to be made, I used to conjure her up in my mind. I said to myself: 'What would she think?' even as we stop in a work of art to think of some great man, one of our great masters. You must be that to me. Will you?"

Paul did not reply. He was looking at the portrait of Aline. It was she, with her pure profile, her merry, kindly mouth, and the long curl caressing the finely-formed neck. Ah! all the Dukes de Mora might come now. Felicia no longer existed for him.

Poor Felicia, endowed with superior powers, was like those witches who tie and untie men's destinies, without being able to do anything for their own happiness.

"Will you give me this sketch?" he asked, in a low, agitated voice.

"With pleasure—she is nice, is she not? Ah! if you ever meet her, love her, marry her. She is worth more than all the rest put together. But still, if you don't meet her—if you don't meet her——"

And the beautiful, tame sphinx raised her large, tearful, and laughing eyes to his face, and there was now no longer anything undecipherable in their enigma.

CHAPTER XII

The Exhibition

"Superb!"

"A huge success! Barye never did anything as beautiful."

"And the bust of the Nabob! What a marvel! Constance Crenmitz, at any rate, is happy. See her trotting about!"

"What! is that Crenmitz, that little old woman in the ermine mantle? I thought she had died twenty years ago."

Oh! no, on the contrary, she is very much alive. Delighted beyond measure, rejuvenated by the triumph of her god-daughter, who is decidedly *the* success of the Exhibition, she roams among the crowd of artists, of society people, who gather at the two places where Felicia's works are displayed, two masses of black coats and mixed toilettes, pressing, stifling one another in order to get a look. Constance, who is, as a rule, so timid, slips into the first row, hears the discussions, catches bits of phrases, of formulas which she remembers, nods, smiles, shrugs her shoulders when she hears a stupid remark, and is disposed to pulverise the first person who does not show admiration.

In the long central transept the crowd of visitors presents a singular contrast to the immobility of the exhibited statues, the imperceptible breath of life that invests their clayey whiteness and their deified movements.

Here you may see wings petrified in the act of a gigantic soaring, a sphere supported by four allegorical figures, whose turning attitude represents a vague waltz rhythm, an ensemble of equilibrium reproducing excellently the illusion of the movement of the earth through space; and arms raised for a signal, bodies of heroic posture, containing an allegory, a symbol that strikes them with death and immortality, yields them up to history, to legend, to that ideal world of the museums, which is visited by the curious and admiring among the nations of the earth.

Though Felicia's bronze group did not possess the proportions of those large works, its exceptional value had procured for it a place at one of the central points, where the public were assembled at that moment, looking, from a respectful distance, over the hedge of officials and policemen, at the Bey of Tunis and his suite, in their long burnous with sculptural folds that made them resemble living statues. The Bey, who had been in Paris a few days, and was the lion of all "first days" and "first nights," had wanted to see the opening of the Exhibition. He was "an enlightened Prince, a friend of the arts," who had in the Bardo a gallery of astonishing Turkish pictures and chromolithographic reproductions of all the battles of the First Empire.

As soon as he entered, he had been struck by the big Arabian greyhound. It was the slougui—the clever, sinewy slougui of his country, the companion of all

his hunting expeditions. He laughed in his black beard, felt the animal's reins, caressed its muscles, seemed to want to excite it yet more, whilst the aristocratic animal, the beast of prey, hot in love and in hunting, doubly drunk, its eyes staring, nostrils opened, showing its teeth, all its limbs stretched and untiring in their vigorous elasticity, seemed already to taste its prey, with the small tip of its hanging tongue, sharpening its teeth with a ferocious grin. If you only looked at the hound, you said to yourself: "He has it!" But the look of the fox immediately reassured you. Beneath the velvet of its shining crupper, with its feline motion, almost on a level with the earth, covering the ground without effort, you felt it had a truly charmed life, and its finely-moulded head with the pointed ears which it turned, as it ran, in the direction of the greyhound, had an expression of ironical security that clearly revealed the gift the gods had given it.

Whilst an inspector of Fine Arts, who had hurried up, his costume all in disorder and bald to his very back, explained to Mohammed the fable of "The Dog and the Fox," as it was told in the catalogue, with the legend: "It so happened they met," and the label: "Property of the Duke de Mora," fat Hemerlingue, sweating and panting by His Highness's side, had much trouble to persuade him that that masterly sculpture was the work of the lovely rider they had seen the day before in the Bois. How could a weak-handed woman thus model hard bronze, give it the semblance of flesh? Of all the wonders of Paris, that was what caused the Bey the greatest astonishment. So he asked the functionary if there was nothing else to be seen, by the same artist.

"Yes, Monseigneur, another master-piece. If your Highness will please follow me, I shall show the way."

The Bey went after him with his suite. They were all splendid types, with chiselled features and pure lines, warm pallors which were absorbed in the whiteness of their haicks. Magnificently draped, they contrasted strangely with the two rows of busts in the avenue they had taken. With the exception of two or three women's faces, with beautiful shoulders framed in petrified lace and marble head-dresses, rendered with that delicacy which lends them the lightness of powdered coiffures, and a few children's profiles with simple lines, in which the polish of the stone appears like a moisture of life, all the rest were nothing but wrinkles, furrows, clenchings and grimaces, our excesses of work, of movements, our nervousness and our fevers opposing that art which is consecrated to repose and beautiful serenity.

At any rate, the Nabob's ugliness had energy in its favour, the vulgar adventurer side of his character, and his expression of kindliness which was so well reproduced by the artist, who had been careful to deepen the plaster with a layer of ochre, giving it almost the swarthy, sun-burnt complexion of the original. The Arabs, when they saw it, uttered a stifled exclamation: "Bou-Saïd" (father of happiness). That was the Nabob's surname in Tunis; the label, as it were, of his good luck. The Bey himself, thinking they had tried to mystify him and lead him in this way to the detested mercanti, looked suspiciously at the Inspector:

"Jansoulet?" he queried in his guttural voice.

"Yes, your Highness, Bernard Jansoulet, the new deputy for Corsica."

This time the Bey turned to Hemerlingue, with contracted eyebrows.

"Deputy?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, since this morning; but there is nothing settled yet."

And the banker, raising his voice, stuttered: "A French Chamber will never admit that adventurer."

No matter! a blow had fallen on the Bey's blind trust in his financial Baron. He had so confidently stated that the other would never be elected, that they could act freely and fearlessly in regard to him. And, behold! instead of a discredited, ruined man, a representative of the nation stood before him, a deputy whose face in stone the Parisians were coming to admire; for, in Oriental eyes, an idea of honour is attached to a public exhibition, and the Nabob's bust had the prestige of a statue that dominates a square. Still yellower than usual, Hemerlingue accused himself of clumsiness and imprudence. But how could he have suspected such a thing? He had been assured the bust was not completed. And, indeed, it had only come that morning, and seemed happy there, shivering with gratified pride, jeering at his enemies with a good-natured smile on its curled lips. A real, silent revenge for the disaster of Saint-Romans.

For a few minutes, the Bey, as cold, as impassive as the sculptured image, stared at it without saying a word, his forehead divided by a straight furrow by which his courtiers alone could read his anger; then, after two quick words in Arabic to order the carriages and assemble his scattered suite, he walked gravely to the exit without looking at anything else.

Just as the white haicks were disappearing beneath

the porch, just in time to see their last folds floating away, the Nabob entered by the central door. That morning he had received the news: "Elected by a crushing majority"; and, after a gorgeous lunch, at which the new Corsican deputy had been well toasted, he came, with some of his guests, to show himself, to see his bust, too, and to enjoy all his fresh glory.

The first person he perceived on arriving was Felicia Ruys, standing leaning against the pedestal of a statue, the centre of compliments and congratulations, to which he hastened to add his own. She was simply draped, in a black dress, embroidered and trimmed with jet, tempering the severity of her costume by the glitter and brilliance of a ravishing little hat all decked with impeyan feathers, the gracefulness of which seemed to be continued and softened by her hair, which fell in little curls over her forehead, dividing the nape into broad waves.

Jenkins, bareheaded, positively panting with effusive enthusiasm, went from one to another of the admiring crowd of artists and fashionable people, enlarging the circle of enthusiasts around the young celebrity, whose guardian and corypheus he constituted himself. His wife was meanwhile conversing with the young woman. Poor Madame Jenkins! He had told her in those fierce tones she alone knew: "You must go and congratulate Felicia." And she did so, controlling her emotion; for she knew now what was concealed at the bottom of his paternal affection, though she avoided any explanation with the Doctor, as if she feared the result.

After Madame Jenkins, the Nabob rushes up, and, taking between his big paws the artist's long, well-

gloved hands, he expresses his gratitude with cordiality that brings tears into his own eyes.

"It is a high honour you have done me, Mademoiselle, to associate my name with yours, my humble person with your triumph, and to prove to all the vermin that are gnawing at my heels that you do not believe in the slanders circulated about me. Truly, what you have done I can never forget. Even if I covered this magnificent bust with gold and diamonds, I should still be under obligation to you."

Happily for the good Nabob, whose feelings are superior to his eloquence, he is compelled to make way for all the numerous people who are attracted by Felicia's radiant talent and fascinating personality. And yet, all the congratulations Felicia received left her comparatively cold, because there was one she desired more than all the others, which she was astonished at not having received. Yes, she thought about him more than she had ever thought about any other man. Was this, at last, love, then, the great passion of love, which is so rare in an artist's soul, incapable of yielding itself wholly to feeling, or was it a simple dream of an honest and bourgeois life, well-sheltered against ennui, that direful ennui, the precursor of storms which she was so right in dreading? In any case, the illusion deceived her, for some days she had been living in delightfully troubled emotions, for, love is so strong, so beautiful, that its counterfeits, its mirages cast a spell over us, and have the power of stirring us as much as love itself.

Already more than once, in the moving and ever-renewed stream of visitors, Felicia thought she recognised Paul de Géry's curly head, when suddenly she uttered a cry of joy. It was not he, however;

It was some one who strongly resembled him, whose regular and peaceful features were always mingled now in her mind with those of her friend Paul, on account of a likeness which was rather moral than physical, and the gentle authority they both exercised over her thoughts.

"Aline!"

"Felicia!"

Standing a little apart from the crowd, the two young girls, for whom it has sufficed to meet again in order to forget five years of estrangement, exchange eager words and memories, whilst little father Joyeuse, his ruddy cheeks illuminated by a new tie, draws himself up, quite proud to see his daughter so heartily welcomed by a celebrity of the day Truly he is right in being proud, for that little Parisian, even as she stands near her brilliantly beautiful friend, does not lose her look of gracefulness, youth, luminous candour, with her twenty downy and golden years, which the delight of meeting has made to bloom with exquisite freshness.

"How happy you must be! I have not seen anything yet; but I hear everyone say it is so beautiful."

"I am happy above all at meeting you again, dear little Aline. It is so long."

"I should think so, you wicked thing. Whose fault was it?"

And, in the saddest recess of her memory, Felicia finds that the date of the rupture coincides in her case with another date, on which her youth died in an unforgettable scene.

"And what have you been doing, darling, all this time?"

"Oh, I! always the same thing. Nothing to t about."

"Yes, yes; we know what you call doing nothing, you brave little thing. It is sacrificing your life to others, is it not?"

But Aline was no longer listening. She was smiling affectionately straight in front of her; and Felicia, turning to see at whom she was smiling, perceived Paul de Géry, who was returning the discreet and tender greeting of Mademoiselle Joyeuse.

"So you know one another?"

"I know M. Paul? I should think so. We very often talk about you. Did he never tell you?"

"Never. He is awfully sly——"

She stopped short, a lightning thought flashed across her mind; and quickly, without listening to De Géry who was coming up to congratulate her on her triumph, she bent towards Aline and whispered quite softly. The other blushed, defended herself with smiles, with words in low tones: "How can you think of it?—At my age!—A grandmama!" And at last she took hold of her father's arm to escape some friendly bantering.

When Felicia saw the young couple going away together, when she understood—what they did not yet know themselves—that they were in love with each other, she felt a crumbling, as it were, around her. Her dream had fallen to the ground in a thousand fragments; she began to trample madly on it. After all, he was right to prefer Aline to her. Would an honest man ever dare to marry Mademoiselle Ruys? She, a home, a family, absurd! You are a courtesan's daughter, my dear; you must be a courtesan yourself, if you want to be anything.

Felicia, sunk in her deep and gloomy thoughts, did not perceive the man who was approaching her—a magnificent, elegant, fascinating man, to whom the public respectfully opened their ranks, whilst the name of Mora was whispered everywhere.

"Well, Mademoiselle! what a splendid success! I only regret one thing, the malicious symbol you have hidden in your master-piece."

On seeing the Duke before her, she shivered.

"Oh, yes! the symbol!" she rejoined, looking at him with a despondent smile; and, leaning against the pedestal of the big voluptuous statue that stood near, with the closed eyes of a woman who gives or abandons herself, she murmured in a low voice, a very low voice:

"Rabelais lied, just like all men. The truth is that the fox is at the end of his tether, that he has no more breath or courage left, and is ready to fall into the ditch, and that if the greyhound still pursues——"

Mora trembled, grew a trifle paler, all his blood flowing back to his heart. Two sombre flames flashed from their eyes, two quick words were whispered; then the Duke bowed low and walked away with a step winged and light, as if the gods were carrying him.

There was at that moment in the palace only one man as happy as he—the Nabob. Escorted by his friends, he filled the big transept by himself alone, talking loudly, gesticulating, so gloriously jubilant that he appeared almost handsome. His head, three-quarters raised, loosely set in his wide, half-open collar, attracted contradictory remarks of the passers-by about his resemblance to the bust; and

the name of Jansoulet, repeated so often in the electoral ballot-boxes, was whispered now by the prettiest mouths, the most powerful voices in Paris.

When the Nabob felt his delicious joy calming down, when he believed he had drained the cup of intoxicating pride, he had only to say to himself: "Deputy! I am a deputy!" and the triumphal cup foamed again to overflowing. It meant the embargo removed from all his property, his awakening from a two months' nightmare, the blast of the mistral sweeping away all his tortures, all his anxieties, even to the insult at Saint-Romans, which nevertheless rankled in his memory.

Deputy!

He laughed to himself as he imagined the Baron's face when he learnt the news, the stupefaction of the Bey when he was conducted to his bust; and suddenly, at the idea that he was no longer a mere gilded adventurer, who excited the stupid admiration of the crowd, but that people considered him as one of the elect of the national will, his good-natured, mobile face grew heavy with deliberate gravity, he formed plans for the future, of reform, and wanted to benefit by the lessons fate had taught him in those latter days. Already, mindful of the promise he had made De Géry, he showed the hungry crew that currishly followed at his heels a certain contemptuous coldness, a policy of authoritative contradictoriness. He called the Marquis of Bois-Landry "my good fellow," sternly imposed silence on "The Governor," whose enthusiasm was becoming scandalous, and swore to himself to get rid, as soon as possible, of all those mendicant and compromising Bohemians.

Penetrating the crowd that surrounded him,

Moessard, the handsome Moëssard, in a sky-blue tie, pale and puffy, his figure compressed in a fashionable coat, seeing that the Nabob, after going twenty times round the sculpture gallery, was moving towards the exit, dashed up, and passing his arm under the Nabob's:

"You take me with you, you know."

In the latter days, in particular, since the election period, he had assumed in the Place Vendôme an authority almost equal to Monpavon's, but more impudent; for, in the matter of impudence, the queen's lover had not his equal on the pavement leading from the Rue Drouot to the Madeleine. This time he made a mistake. The muscular arm he pressed shook him off violently, and the Nabob addressed him very dryly:

"I am sorry, my dear sir, I have no room."

No room in a carriage as large as a house, which had brought five of them there.

Moëssard looked at him in bewilderment:

"But I had a few urgent words to say to you about my little note. You got it all right?"

"Certainly, and M. De Géry must have answered you this very morning. What you ask is impossible. Twenty thousand francs! By God!"

"Still, I think my services——" stammered the dandy.

"You have been paid liberally for them. That's what I think, too. Two hundred thousand francs in five months! We will stop there, if you please. You have long teeth, young man; they need a little filing."

They exchanged these words as they walked, pushed on by the crush of people moving to the door. Moëssard stopped:

"That's your last word?"

The Nabob hesitated a second, seized by a presentiment of evil, at that villainous, pale mouth; then he remembered the promise he had given his friend.

"That's my last word."

"Very good! we shall see," said handsome Moessard, whose cane cleft the air with the hiss of a viper; and, turning on his heel, he walked away with big strides, like a man who is expected somewhere for a very urgent business.

Jansoulet continued his triumphal march. It would have required a great deal to disturb the balance of his happiness on that day; on the contrary, he felt fortified by his quick and decisive act.

The huge vestibule was filled with a compact crowd, who were on their way out, as the time for closing approached, but whom one of those sudden showers, that seem to form part of the opening of the Salon, kept beneath the porch, on the well-trodden, sandy ground. There were bursts of laughter, chatting, greetings, fits of impatience, skirts turned up, puffy satins on the delicate folds of petticoats and the tender gleams of silk stockings, billows of fringes, laces, flounces held up in one hand like heavy parcels, crumpled up. There were footmen running under umbrellas, names of coachmen and masters shouted out, broughams slowly driving up, into which bewildered couples got.

"M. Jansoulet's carriage!"

Everybody turned, but you know that never embarrassed him. And whilst, amid all these elegant women, these famous men, the worthy Nabob posed a little, as he waited for his servants, a nervous and

well-gloved hand was held out to him, and the Duke de Mora, who was going to his carriage, said to him, as he passed, with that effusion which happiness gives even to the most reserved of natures:

"My congratulations, my dear deputy."

It was uttered in a loud voice, so that everyone could hear: "My dear deputy."

There is, in the life of all men, a golden hour, a luminous summit, where all the prosperity, the joys, the triumphs they may hope for, await them and are bestowed on them. That summit the Nabob reached on the evening of 1st May, as the sun shone through the rain.

CHAPTER XIII

A Public Man

The luminous heat of a clear May afternoon was warming the higher windows (like a conservatory) of the Hôtel de Mora, whose transparent blue silk curtains could be seen from outside between the branches, and the extensive terraces, where the exotic flowers ran like a border along the quay. All the luxury of the princely mansion was basking in the happy mildness of the weather, borrowing a solemn beauty from the silence, the repose of noon, the only one in which you did not hear the rolling of carriages under the arches, and the closing of the big anteroom doors. It was known that up to three o'clock the Duke gave audience at the ministry; therefore no visitors or petitioners came, and the footmen perched, like flamingoes, on the steps of the deserted entrance, alone enlivened it with the thin shadow of their long legs and their lazy yawns of boredom.

It was an exception on that day for Jenkins's chestnut brougham to be waiting in a corner of the court. The Duke, unwell since the day before, had felt worse on getting up from lunch, and had immediately to send for the Pearl doctor to inquire about

his singular condition. He had no pain, his sleep and appetite were as usual; but he felt an unspeakable lassitude and the sensation of a terrible chilliness that nothing could relieve.

Was Jenkins's restlessness occasioned by the indisposition of his illustrious client? He seemed nervous, anxious, strode up and down the room, ferreting about, looking to right and left, seeking something in the air which he thought to be there, something subtle and unseizable, like the trace of a perfume or the invisible track left by a flying bird. You heard the crackling of the wood in the fire-place, the rustling of papers hastily turned over, the indolent voice of the Duke indicating by a word, always precise and clear, an answer to a four-page letter, and the Attache's respectful monosyllables: "Yes, Monsieur le Ministre—No, Monsieur le Ministre," then the scratching of a rebellious and heavy pen. Outside, the swallows joyously twittered above the water, a clarionet was playing near the bridges.

"It's impossible," said all at once the Minister, rising. "Take it away, Lartigues; come to-morrow. I can't write—I am too cold. Here, doctor, feel my hands: is it not as if they had been in a pail of iced water? My whole body has been like that for two days. Is it not absurd in this weather?"

"It does not astonish me," grumbled the Irishman in a surly, curt tone, hardly customary with that mellifluous person.

Jenkins silently examined his patient, used auscultation and percussion, then, in the same gruff tones which might, in the last resort, be explained by his uneasy affection for the Duke, by the irritation of a doctor who sees his instructions neglected:

"Tell me, my dear Duke, what kind of life have you been leading for some time now?"

He knew from anteroom talk—the doctor did not disdain it, in the houses of his familiar clients—he knew that the Duke had a new intrigue, that this recent caprice agitated him extraordinarily, and that, taken together with remarks dropped elsewhere, inspired Jenkins with a suspicion, a mad desire to know the name of the lady. But Mora's discretion was closed in a steely, blue eye, into which cunning perspicacity could not penetrate.

"You are mistaken, doctor," replied his Excellency calmly. "I have made no change in my habits."

"Well! then, Monsieur le Duc, you were wrong," said the Irishman brutally, furious at not being able to discover anything.

And suddenly feeling that he had gone too far, he toned down his ill temper and the severity of his diagnosis in a heap of banalities, axioms. Care had to be taken. Medicine was not magic. The power of Jenkins's Pearls was limited by human strength, the necessities of age, the resources of Nature, which, unhappily, are not inexhaustible. The Duke interrupted him in a nervous tone.

"Look here, Jenkins, you know well I don't like phrases. Is there anything the matter? What is it? Where does the chilliness come from?"

"It's anæmia, exhaustion—a lowering of the oil in the lamp."

"What must I do?"

"Nothing. Absolute rest. Eat, sleep, nothing else. If you could go for a few weeks to Grandbois——"

Mora shrugged his shoulders:

"And the Chamber, and the Council, and——? Come now! how can I?"

"In any case, Monsieur le Duc, you must put the break on, and absolutely give up——"

Jenkins was interrupted by the entry of the usher, who came discreetly, on tip-toe, like a dancing-master, to hand a letter and a card to the Minister, who was still shivering in his blue furs before the fire. When the Irishman saw that grey, satin, quaint-shaped envelope, he started involuntarily, whilst the Duke, opening and reading the letter, got up with a rejuvenated air, his cheeks slightly reddened with the flush of factitious health, which all the heat of the fire-place had failed to give him.

"My dear doctor, I must at any cost——"

The usher stood waiting.

"What is it?—Oh! yes, this card—Admit the person to the gallery. I am coming."

The Duke de Mora's gallery, which was opened to visitors twice a week, was neutral ground for him, a public place where he could see anybody without binding or compromising himself. Then, when the usher was outside:

"Jenkins, my good fellow, you have already done wonders for me. I ask you to do another. Double the dose of my Pearls, invent something, what you please. But I must be all alive on Sunday. You understand, altogether alive."

And his warm, feverish fingers clenched the little note he held, with a shivering of concupiscence.

"Take care, M. le Duc," said Jenkins, very pale, his lips compressed, "I don't wish to alarm you unnecessarily about your weak condition, but it is my duty——"

Mora smiled insolently:

"Your duty and my pleasure are two different things, my dear sir. Allow me to burn my life away if it pleases me. I have never had such a fine opportunity as I have now."

He started.

The Duchess!

A tapestried door had just opened, revealing a dishevelled, little blonde head, all airy in the laces and fringes of a princely morning gown.

"What's that I hear? You have not been out? —Scold him, doctor. Is he not wrong to have his own way so much? Look at him. How well he looks!"

"There—you see," said the Duke, laughing to the Irishman. "You are not coming in, Duchess?"

"No; on the contrary, I am going to take you with me. My uncle D'Estaing has sent me a cageful of birds. I want to show you them. Marvels of all colours, with small eyes like black pearls. And chilly, almost as chilly as you."

"Let's go and see," answered the Minister. "Wait for me, Jenkins. I shall be back."

Then, noticing that he was still holding the letter in his hand, he carelessly threw it into the drawer of his small table, and followed the Duchess out, with the splendid coolness of a husband who is used to such manœuvres.

Thereupon Jenkins, hatred and anger in his savage, ashy-pale face, cast a rapid glance at the two doors, and speedily found himself before the drawer, full of precious documents, in which the little golden key was left with an insolent negligence that seemed to say: "Nobody will dare."

Jenkins, however, did dare.

The letter was there, the first one, on the top of a heap of others. The texture of the paper, the three words of the address written in a simple, bold hand, and moreover the perfume, that intoxicating, conjuring perfume, the very breath of her divine mouth. So it was true, his jealous love had not deceived him, nor the embarrassment they had shown in his presence for some time, nor Constance's secretive and rejuvenated airs, nor those magnificent bouquets that bloomed in the studio, as if in the mysterious shadow of some mistaken step. Had her indomitable pride at last yielded? But then, why not to him, Jenkins? To him who had loved her so long, who had always loved her, who was ten years younger than the other, and who did not shiver!—Such thoughts went through his head, like arrows shot from a tireless bow. And, overwhelmed, anguished, his eyes bloodshot, he remained there, looking at the small, cold, satiny envelope, which he did not venture to open, for fear of clearing away a last doubt, when the rustling of tapestry warned him of some one's approach. He threw the letter quickly back and shut the marvellously fitting drawer of the lacquer table.

"Hallo! it's you, Jansoulet; how is it you are here?"

"His Excellency bade me come and wait for him in his room," answered the Nabob, very proud of being thus introduced into the inner apartments, especially at an hour when the Duke did not receive people. The fact is, the Duke was beginning to show a genuine sympathy for the savage. For several reasons; first of all, he liked bold, lucky adventurers. Was he not one himself? Then the Nabob amused him with his

accent, his easy manners, his rather brutal and shameless flattery. Besides, he was a fine card-player, and would lose at the Rue Royale Club, without wincing, in écarté at five thousand francs a point. He was also always ready to buy any of the Duke's pictures, at the Duke's own price. Add to these reasons for sympathy a feeling of pity and indignation he had recently experienced, as he noted the cruel eagerness with which the unfortunate man was being persecuted, the cowardly, ruthless war, so skilfully carried on that public opinion, ever credulous and extending its neck to sniff the wind, was beginning to be seriously influenced. We must do Mora the justice to state that he was not a follower of the crowd.

Jenkins and Jansoulet, rather embarrassed in one another's presence, exchanged a few commonplaces. Their great friendship had much cooled down for some time, Jansoulet having refused any further subsidy to the Bethlehem Refuge; besides, the Nabob was asking himself if the doctor was going to be present at the conversation he wanted to have with the Duke on the subject of certain allusions with which the *Messager* was worrying him, and he was anxious also to know whether these slanders had not chilled the goodwill of the Minister, which was so necessary to him, now that the moment for confirming his election had arrived. The welcome he had received in the gallery had half tranquillised him; he was altogether reassured, when the Duke returned and came up to him, with outstretched hand.

"Well, my poor Jansoulet, I am afraid Paris is giving you a scurvy welcome. What an uproar and hatred and bitterness!"

"Ah, M. le Duc, if you knew——"

"I know. I have read," said the Minister, drawing near the fire.

"I trust your Excellency does not believe those infamies. Besides, I have here--I have brought the proof."

With his strong, hairy paws, trembling with excitement, he searched in the documents of a shagreen portfolio that he held under his arm.

"Enough — enough. I know all about it. I know that, intentionally or not, they confuse you with another person; that family considerations——"

Seeing the dazed look of the Nabob, who was amazed to find him so well informed, the Duke could not help smiling.

"A Minister has to know everything. But don't get uneasy. Your election shall be confirmed. And when once it is confirmed——"

Jansoulet heaved a sigh of relief.

"Oh! M. le Duc, how much good you do me by saying so. I was beginning to lose self confidence. My enemies are so powerful. Besides, an ill streak of luck. You know it is Le Merquier who has to report on my election."

"Le Merquier?—the devil!"

"Yes, Le Merquier, Hemerlingue's agent, the canting humbug who converted the Baroness, no doubt because his religion forbade him to take a Moslem lady for a mistress."

"Now, now, Jansoulet."

"How can I help it, M. le Duc? You are also angry at times. Think of the position in which I am through those scoundrels. My election ought to have been confirmed a week ago, but they intentionally have the meeting put off, because they know my

dreadful situation, all my fortune paralysed, the Bey awaiting the Chamber's decision to know whether he can plunder me or not. I have eighty millions in Tunis, Monsieur le Duc, and here I am beginning to be hard up. If it lasts a little longer——"

He wiped off the big drops of sweat that ran down his cheeks.

"Well! I will myself see that the election is validated," answered the Minister, with some energy. "I shall write to what's-his-name to hurry on his report; and even if I should have to be carried into the Chamber——"

"Your Excellency is unwell?" questioned Jansoulet in a tone of interest that had nothing deceptive about it, I swear.

"No—a little weakness. I have not enough blood; but Jenkins is going to give me some. Are you not, Jenkins?"

The Irishman, who was not listening, made a vague gesture.

"By God! And I have too much blood." And the Nabob widened his cravat around his neck, which was swollen to apoplexy by his excitement and the warmth of the room. "If only I could give you some, M. le Duc!"

"It would be a good thing for both of us," said the Minister with a shade of irony. "For you especially, who are so violent and who ought at this time to be so calm. Take care, Jansoulet. Don't let yourself be led into anything rash in a moment of rage; it is exactly what they want to drive you to. Say to yourself that now you are a public man, standing on a platform, from which all your gestures can be seen at a distance. The newspapers abuse you; don't read

them, if you cannot hide the feelings they excite in you.

"Don't do what I myself did with my blind man of the Pont de la Concorde, that dreadful clarionet player, who has been spoiling my life for the last ten years by performing all day long the air, 'De tes fils, Norma.' I tried everything to make him go away—money, threats. He would not—The police? Really? With modern ideas, it becomes quite a long affair to detach a blind man from his bridge. The Opposition journals would speak of it, the Parisians would make a fable of it. 'The Cobbler and the Financier.' 'The Duke and the Clarionette.' I have to resign myself to it. Besides, it was my fault. I ought never to have let the man know that he was annoying me. I am sure that my torture is now an important part of his life. He leaves his hovel every morning, with his dog, his stool, his frightful instrument, and says to himself: 'Let's go and worry the Duke de Mora.' He never misses a day, the scoundrel! Well! that journalist of the *Messager* is your clarionet; if you let him see that his music wearies you, he will never finish. And now, my dear deputy, I remind you that you have a meeting at three in the committee rooms, and so I send you back at once to the Chamber."

Then, turning to Jenkins:

"You know what I asked you for, doctor. Some Pearls for the day after to-morrow. And strong ones!"

Jenkins started, pulled himself together, as if waking from a dream.

"Very good, my dear Duke. I will give you wind—wind enough to win the Derby."

He bowed and went out laughing—a real wolf's laugh, showing his white, regular teeth. The Nabob took leave in his turn, his heart full of gratitude, but not daring to show it to that sceptic, in whom any demonstrativeness excited mistrust. And the Minister, now alone, crouching before the crackling and burning fire, sheltered in luxurious warmth, began shivering again, shivering so much that Felicia's letter, which he held open in his pale fingers and read with the passion of desire, trembled, rustling like silk stuff.

A deputy's situation is very singular during the period that follows his election and precedes—as they call it in Parliamentary jargon—the verification of powers. The deputy is elected and yet not elected, and the uncertainty lasts days and weeks, and the longer it lasts, the more problematic the validation becomes. This enervating situation was complicated for the Nabob by the slanders, whispered at first, but now printed and circulated in thousands of copies, the result of which was that he was put in quarantine by his colleagues.

However, about six o'clock, Jansoulet, having completed his task in the committee-rooms, where he was acting as chairman of a committee appointed to inquire into a recent ballot, left, accompanied as far as his carriage by M. Sarigue, a deputy whose election had been confirmed on Jansoulet's report, drawn up by De Géry. The splendid weather, a beautiful golden sunset over the Seine by the Trocadero, tempted our robust plebeian to return on foot. He accordingly dismissed his servants, and, his portfolio under his arm, he went over the Pont de la Concorde. He had not felt so cheerful since 1st May. Moving his shoulders about, his hat slightly on the back of his

head, in the position he had seen assumed by exhausted politicians, overwhelmed with business, who want to cool the industrious fever of their brains in the fresh air, he walked among other men like himself in appearance, who had obviously come out of that colonnaded temple opposite the Madeleine, above the monumental fountains of the Place. As they passed, people turned round and said: "There are the deputies." And Jansoulet felt a childlike delight at it, the delight of the vulgar, composed of ignorance and naive vanity.

"The *Messager*! Evening edition!"

It came from the newspaper kiosk at the corner of the bridge, which was then full of newspapers, just arrived, lying in heaps. Nearly all the deputies, as they passed, bought a paper, in the hope of seeing their name in it Jansoulet was afraid to see his own and did not stop. Then all at once he thought: "Ought not a public man to be above such weaknesses? I am strong enough now to read everything." He returned, and bought a paper. He opened it very calmly, just at the place where Moessard's articles usually were. There was another one. It had the same title as the first of the series: "Chinoiseries," and was signed "M."

"Ah! ah!" said the public man, firm and cold as marble, with a finely scornful smile. Mora's lesson still rang in his ears, and if he had forgotten it, the thin, ironical notes of the air from "Norma," not far off, would have been enough to recall it. But, when every calculation has been made in the hurried events of our lives, we have still to reckon with the unforeseen; and that is why the poor Nabob all at once felt a rush of blood blinding him, a cry of rage stifled in the

sudden contraction of his throat. This time, his mother, his old Françoise, was mixed up with infamous pleasantries. What a good shot he was, that Moessard; how well he knew the really sensitive spots in that heart so naively laid bare.

"Now, now, Jansoulet."

In vain he repeated the Duke's words to himself: he was carried away by anger, mad anger, the intoxication of the blood that wants blood. It was the time when Society people are coming home from the Bois. The Place was full of victorias and broughams and other carriages coming down from the brilliantly-glorious Arc-de-Triomphe to the fresh, violet-tinted Tuileries. Jansoulet, paper in hand, went through the crowd, without thinking about it, drawn by habit towards the club, where he went every day to play cards from six to seven. He was still a public man, but excited, speaking out loud, muttering oaths and threats in a voice that suddenly became tender again at the memory of the good old woman. What punishment could he invent for such an infamy? He was near the Rue Royale, where rapid flashes of returning wheels were mixed up with visions of veiled women, fair-haired children, equipages of all kinds returning from the Bois.

Opposite the Ministry of Marine, a high phaeton on light wheels was passing, that looked like a big spider, whose body would have consisted of the little groom on the rumble and the two persons occupying the front seat, and, as it turned the corner, it nearly grazed the pavement.

The Nabob raised his head, stifled an exclamation.

By the side of a painted, red-haired girl, who had

a diminutive hat with broad strings, and who, perched on her leather cushion, drove the horse with her hands, her eyes, all her made up person, which was stiff and bent at the same time, sat, pink and painted also, flourishing on the same dung-heap, battening on the same vices, Moessard, pretty Moessard. The woman and the journalist, and she was not the more corrupted of the pair!

Jansoulet dropped his portfolio, and, as if he had let fall at the same time all his gravity, his prestige as a public man, he made a terrible bound and leapt at the bit of the horse, which he stopped with his strong, hairy hands.

A stoppage in the Rue Royale, and in the day-time! Only that Tartar would have dared such a coup!

"Get down!" he said to Moessard, whose face had turned green and yellow on perceiving him. "Get down, at once!"

"Let go the horse, you——! The whip, Suzanne; it's the Nabob."

She tried to gather up the reins, but the animal, held tight, reared so violently, that the frail car was in danger of upsetting its occupants. Then, furious with a vulgar rage which, in such women, abolishes all the varnish of their luxury and their complexion, she lashed the Nabob with two blows of her whip that struck his tanned, hard face, and gave it a savage expression, accentuated by the short nose that had become white, and was split at the end like that of a terrier.

"Get down, by God! or I'll upset you."

In an eddy of carriages that had stopped because they could not move on, or which were slowly turning the obstacle, with thousands of inquisitive eyes upon

him, among cries of coachmen, the clinking of bits, two iron wrists shook the phaeton.

"Get down," said the woman; "get down—you see he will upset us. What a grip!"

And she looked at the Hercules with interest.

Moessard had hardly put his foot on the ground, before fleeing to the pavement where policemen's black képis were hastening, when Jansoulet fell upon him, lifted him up by the nape like a rabbit, and without heeding his frightened protests and stammering:

"Yes, yes, I'll give you satisfaction, you scoundrel. But I intend beforehand to treat you as unclean beasts are treated, so that they don't do so again."

And he began roughly to rub, to scour him with his newspaper which he held like a clout, and with which he stifled, he blinded him, with scratches that bled beneath the paint of his face. They tore him out of his hands, purple, suffocated. It would not have needed much more to kill him.

The struggle ended, readjusting his cuffs, his crumpled linen, picking up the portfolio, the Nabob replied to the policeman who asked him his name for drawing up a report: "Bernard Jansoulet, Deputy for Corsica."

A public man!

Then only did he remember it. Who would have thought it who saw him thus panting and bareheaded, like a porter after a brawl, under the eager, coldly mocking looks of the crowd, which was about to disperse?

CHAPTER XIV

The Apparition

If you like to see sincere and straightforward love, outbursts of affection and tenderness, laughter—that laugh of boundless happiness bordering on tears, and the charming wildness of youth, lit up by bright eyes, transparent to the bottom of their souls—you will find it all, this Sunday morning, in a house you know, a new house, right at the extremity of the old faubourg.

"Accepted, it is accepted. Oh! what luck! Henrietta, Élise, come here! M. Maranne's play is accepted."

André knows the news since yesterday. Cardailhac, the manager of the Nouveautés, has sent for him to say that his drama would be mounted at once, that it would be played next month. They spent the evening talking of the scenery, the cast; and as, when he came back from the theatre, it was too late to knock at his neighbour's door, the happy author had watched for daylight with feverish impatience; then, as soon as he heard steps in the room below, and the shutters opening on the façade, he rushed down to give his friends the good news. Now they are all assembled, the young ladies in pretty dishabille,

hastily tidied, and M. Joyeuse, whom the event surprised as he was shaving, showed under his embroidered nightcap a curious face, shaven on one side, and not on the other. But the most excited of all was André Maranne, for you know what the acceptance of the "Révolte" implies for him, and what they have agreed about with Bonne Maman. The poor boy looks at her, as if to seek encouragement in her eyes; and her eyes, which are rather bantering and kindly, have the appearance of saying: "Try. What risk are you running?" He also, in order to give himself courage, looks at Mademoiselle Élise, who is pretty as a flower, with her long lashes lowered. At length, taking his courage in both hands:

"Monsieur Joyeuse," he says in a stifled voice, "I have something very serious to tell you."

M. Joyeuse is astonished.

"Serious! My goodness, you frighten me."

And, lowering his voice also:

"Are these young ladies in the way?"

"No. Bonne Maman knows what it is all about. Mademoiselle Élise no doubt suspects it. It is only the children." Mademoiselle Henriette and her sister are begged to retire, which they at once do, the one with a majestic and annoyed expression, like a true daughter of the Saint-Amand; the other, the young Chinese Yaia, with a mad desire to laugh she could hardly restrain.

Then a deep silence. Next, the lover begins his little tale.

I believe that Mademoiselle Élise really suspects something, for, as soon as the young neighbour spoke about "something serious to tell," she pulled a book of adventures out of her pocket, which excite her so

much that the book trembles between her fingers. And well might she tremble, to see the bewilderment, the indignant stupefaction, with which M. Joyeuse receives the proposal for the hand of his daughter.

"Is it possible? How did it happen? What a prodigious event! Who would have suspected such a thing?"

And all at once the dear old man bursts out into a huge fit of laughter. Well! no, it is not true. He knew all about the affair for a long time; he had been told about it.

Papa knew everything! Then Bonne Maman betrayed them? And, meeting the reproachful looks that are turned on her, the culprit comes forward, smiling.

"Yes, my friends, I did. The secret was too weighty. I could not keep it to myself. And, besides, father is so good. You can't keep anything from him."

So saying, she throws her arms round the little man's neck, but it is big enough for two, and when Mademoiselle Élise has in her turn taken refuge there, an affectionate, paternal hand is extended to him whom M. Joyeuse henceforth regards as his own son. Silent embraces, long looks that meet with emotion or passion, happy minutes one would like to hold back for ever by the frail tips of their wings!

After this first excitement, they speak more seriously in their usual voices. The young couple will be installed in the floor above. Photography shall be kept on, unless "Révolte" produces enormous profits. (Trust the Visionary for that.) At any rate, father will always be near them; he has a good berth at his

stockbroker's, and some expert work to be done for the Palais; provided the small ship goes on floating in the water of the big ship, all will be well, with the help of the tide, the wind, and their good star.

One question only preoccupies M. Joyeuse. "Will André's parents consent to the marriage? How would the rich, renowned Dr Jenkins——"

"Don't let us talk of that fellow," said André, growing pale. "He is a wretch to whom I owe nothing—who is nothing to me——"

He stops, rather embarrassed by his outburst of wrath, which he could not restrain and could not explain, and he resumes more gently.

"My mother, who sometimes comes to see me, although the Doctor has forbidden her, was the first one to be informed of my plans. She already loves Mademoiselle Élise as her own daughter. You will see, Mademoiselle, how kindly, beautiful, and charming she is. What a misfortune that she belongs to so wicked a man, who tyrannises over her, and tortures her even to forbidding her to mention her son's name!"

Poor Maranne heaves a sigh, that tells of the deep distress at the bottom of his heart. But what sadness could hold out against that dear face lit up with fair curls, and the radiant prospect of future happiness? The serious questions being settled, the door was opened, and the two exiles were called in. In order not to fill their little heads with ideas beyond their years, it is agreed to tell them nothing of the prodigious event, to say nothing except that they must dress quickly, and lunch still more quickly, so as to be able to spend the afternoon in the Bois, where

Maranne will read his play, before they go to Suresne to eat white bait at Kontzen's; a whole programme of pleasures in honour of the acceptance of "Révolte," and of another piece of good news which they will know later on.

"Oh, really!—What is it?" the two girls ask with innocent looks.

But if you imagine they don't know what it is all about, if you imagine that, when Mademoiselle Élise used to knock three times on the ceiling, they fancied it was specially to ask about the customers, you are even more credulous than old Joyeuse.

"All right, all right, young ladies. Go and get dressed."

For ten minutes, there is a going to and fro around the charming "grandma." Everybody needs her; she has the keys of everything; distributes the pretty white, frilled linen, embroidered handkerchiefs, dress gloves, all those treasures which, when taken out of boxes and wardrobes, spread out on the beds, fill a house with the bright cheerfulness of Sunday.

When they are ready and the lunch is over, they went into the drawing-room to put on their hats before the looking-glass. Bonne Maman was giving a general glance, sticking a pin here, tying a ribbon there, tidying the paternal cravat; but, whilst all these small people were bursting with impatience, eager to be out of doors on such a lovely day, a ring of the bell is heard and disturbs the holiday feeling.

"Suppose we don't open?" the youngsters suggest.

And what relief, what cries of joy, when they see their friend Paul come in!

"Quick, quick, come! We have good news!".

He knew before any of them that the play had

been accepted. He had taken a lot of trouble to induce Cardailhac to read it. But he took care not to mention this. Bonne Maman, alone of them all, kept her habitually peaceful expression; but you felt in her, in her busy care for her sister Élise, a certain still tenderer attention, quite an anxiety to make her even prettier. And it was delightful to see the girl of twenty adorning another, without jealousy, without regret, with something of the sweet self-sacrifice of a mother celebrating the young love of her daughter in memory of a past happiness. Paul saw it; he was the only one who saw it. But love, as you know, is a poor blind boy, who is moreover deprived of hearing, of speech, and is only guided by intuitions, divinations, the nervous faculties. And at the very moment when Paul, who, whilst admiring Aline, was sadly asking himself whether she had any capacity for love beyond that for her present family, was telling his friends that he was about to start on a journey of several days, or, perhaps, weeks, he did not see the young girl's sudden pallor, did not hear the cry of pain that escaped from her discreet lips:

"You are going?"

He was going off to Tunis, very uneasy at leaving his poor Nabob among his greedy crew; still Mora's protection reassured him a little, and besides, the journey was indispensable.

"And the Territoriale?" asked the old accountant, returning as usual to his idea—"how is it going on? I still see Jansoulet's name as chairman. Can't you drag him out of that Ali Baba's cave? Take care—take care!"

"Ah! I know it, M. Joyeuse. But, in order to get out of it with honour, money is needful, much money,

a fresh sacrifice of two or three millions; and we have not got it. It is for that purpose I am going to Tunis to try and rescue from the rapacious Bey a portion of the large fortune he so unjustly detains. At this moment, I still have some chance of succeeding, whilst, perhaps, later on——"

"Then go quickly, my dear boy, and if you return with a big bag of money, as I hope you will, attend, above all, to the Paganetti crew. Remember, it only needs a shareholder who is less patient than the rest to explode the whole thing, to demand an inquiry; and you know what an inquiry would reveal. On reflection," added M. Joyeuse, whose brow contracted, "I am astonished that Hemerlingue, with his hatred against you, has not secretly procured a few shares——"

He was interrupted by a concert of maledictions which Hemerlingue's name evoked among the young girls. In the midst of their exclamations, the Visionary continued his hypothesis of the fat Baron becoming a shareholder in the Territoriale, in order to be able to cite his enemy before the tribunals. And you may imagine the amazement of André Maranne, who was absolutely unacquainted with the affair, when he beheld M. Joyeuse turning to him, his face purple and swollen, and pointing at him, with the terrible words:

"The greatest rascal here is yourself, sir."

"Oh! papa, papa! What are you saying?"

"Eh!—What?—Oh! I am sorry, my dear André. I thought I was in the chambers of the Judge, face to face with that swindler. It's my cursed brain, that's always getting carried away somewhere."

A wild peal of laughter burst out through the open

windows, and mingled outside with the noise of carriages and people in their Sunday best, who were going up the Avenue des Ternes; and the author of "Révolte" seized the occasion to ask if they were going to start soon. It was late—the good places would be taken up in the Bois.

"The Bois de Boulogne on a Sunday!" said Paul de Géry.

"Oh! Our Bois is not yours," answered Aline smiling. "Come with us; you will see."

Behind the sandy, well-watered, clean avenues of the Bois, where rows of carriages, slowly turning round the lake, leave their furrows all day long, behind the wonderful landscape of wall-like verdure, of captive water, of fertile rocks, the true wood, the wild wood, with its blooming thickets, grows and grows, forming impenetrable shelters, crossed by tiny footpaths, babbling brooks. That is the Bois of the poor, the Bois of the humble, the little forest under the big one. And Paul, who knew nothing of the aristocratic Parisian promenade but the long avenues, the sparkling lake that could be seen from a coach or from the top of a four-wheeled brake, amid the dust of a return-journey from Longchamps, was surprised at seeing the deliciously sheltered corner to which his friends had taken him.

It was on the margin of a pond, spread out, like a mirror, under willows, covered with water-lilies and duck-weed, cleft here and there by broad white spots, sunbeams that fell and spread over the glittering surface, which was touched by the long legs of fire-flies as if with diamond points.

On the slope, which was covered with thick grass, they had sat down to listen to André's reading. The

eloquent young voice of the poet rose in the deep silence, the verses fled on, shivering, repeated in a low voice by other agitated lips, and there were stifled cries of admiration, shudders at the tragic passages. Even Bonne Maman was seen to wipe away a big tear. What it is not to have a bit of embroidery at hand!

"You were right, I did not know the Bois," whispered Paul quite low to Aline, who leant on his arm.

The reading over, they were now following a narrow, shady alley, and, as they talked, they walked very quickly, well in front of the others. But it was not old Kontzen's shop nor his crisp whitebait that were attracting them. No, the beautiful verses they had just heard had transported them into the high heavens, and they had not yet returned to earth. They were going straight on, towards the ever-receding end of the path, which broadened, at its extremity, into a luminous glory, a dust of sunbeams, as if all the sunshine of that lovely day was awaiting them at the end. Never had Paul felt so happy. That light arm resting on his, that child's step by which his own was guided, would have made his life as sweet and easy as was that promenade on the moss of the green alley. He would have said so, in simple words, to the young girl, just as he felt it, had he not been afraid to scare Aline's trust in him, which was no doubt the result of her knowledge of the feelings he had for another woman, and which seemed to banish from them all thoughts of love.

All at once, right in front of them, down there on the clear background, a pair of riders stood out, at first vague and indistinct, showing a man and woman

elegantly mounted and riding up into the mysterious alley, amid the bars of gold, the leafy shadows, the thousand rays of light with which the soil was mottled, and which they displaced as they drew near by bounds. They were coming slowly, capriciously; and the two young people, who had stepped aside in the thicket, were able to see, passing close to them, with creakings of new leather, a noise of proudly-tossed bits, white with foam, as if after a furious gallop, two superb animals ridden by a couple brought close together by the narrowing of the path; he, supporting with one arm the supple waist of a lady in a bodice of dark cloth, she, with her hand on the shoulder of the horseman and her small head leaning tenderly on it, her head that they could see in profile under her small tulle veil that had been half drawn back. That loving embrace, rocked by the impatience of the horses which were slightly held up in their gallop, that kiss amid the reins, that passion which coursed the wood like a hunt, in open day, with such contempt for public opinion, would have sufficed to betray the Duke and Felicia, if the proud, enchanting appearance of the lady and the aristocratic ease of her companion, his pallor slightly relieved by the ride and Jenkins's miraculous Pearls, had not made them already recognisable.

It was not extraordinary to meet Mora in the Bois on Sunday. Like his master, he liked to show himself to the Parisians, to keep up his popularity with all classes. But it was only a mad, audacious woman like that Felicia who would thus have advertised herself, ruined her reputation for ever.

"You saw?" said Paul, the first to speak.

She had seen and she had understood, in spite of

her innocent candour, for a blush spread over her face, one of those feelings of shame you feel for the faults of those you love.

"Poor Felicia!" she said in a low voice, pitying not only the unhappy lost woman who had just passed, but also him whom that jilting was bound to strike right in the heart. The truth is that Paul de Géry was not a bit surprised at the meeting, which justified some previous suspicions and the instinctive estrangement he felt for the charmer, when dining with her some days before. But it seemed sweet to him to be pitied by Aline, to feel the sympathy of her more tender voice, of her arm that leant more upon his. Like children, who pretend to be ill, for the joy of maternal caresses, he allowed his consoler to be affectionately anxious about his trouble, to talk to him about his brothers, the Nabob, and his coming journey to Tunis—a fine country, she had heard.

"You must write often to us, and long letters, about the curious things you meet with on your travels, the place you live in. Because you can see better those who are far away, when you are able to imagine their surroundings." Whilst talking, they reached the end of the shaded alley, terminated by an immense clearing, in which moved all the tumult of the Bois, carriages and riders alternately, and the crowd that seemed at that distance to be tramping in a fleecy powder that massed it together confusedly, like a flock of sheep. Paul slackened his steps, emboldened by this last minute of solitude.

"Do you know what I am thinking of?" he said, taking Aline's hand. "It is that I should like to be unhappy, if I had you to comfort me. But, precious as your pity is to me, I could not let you waste it on

an imaginary unhappiness. No, my heart is not broken, but, on the contrary, more full of life, stronger than ever. And if I were to tell you what miracle has preserved it, what talisman——"

He showed her a small oval frame, containing a profile without shading, a simple pencil outline in which Aline recognised herself, surprised at being so pretty, as if reflected in Love's magic mirror. Tears started to her eyes, without her knowing why, a spring with its source in her chaste breast. Paul went on:

"That portrait belongs to me. It was made for me. Yet, as I am now going away, a scruple has come to me. I only wish to have it from yourself. So take it, and if you find a worthier friend, some one who loves you with a deeper, more loyal love than mine, I allow you to give it to him."

She had recovered from her confusion, and looking De Géry straight in the eyes with grave tenderness:

"If I only listened to my heart, I should not hesitate what to reply; for, if you love me as you say, I think I love you too. But I am not free, I am not alone in life. Look there!"

She pointed to her father and sisters, who, beckoning from afar, were hurrying to them.

"Well! And I?" answered Paul quickly. "Have I not the same duties, the same burdens? We are like two widowed heads of families. Will you not love my family as much as I love yours?"

"True? Is it true? You will leave me with them? I shall be Aline for you, and always Bonne Maman for all our children? Oh, then!" said the dear creature, radiant with joy, her face lit up with love, "then here is my portrait. I give it you. And my whole soul with it, for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XV

JENKINS'S PEARLS

ABOUT a week after his encounter with Moessard, a fresh complication in the terrible mess of his affairs, Jansoulet, as he left the Chamber one Thursday, drove to Mora's house. He had not been there since the row in the Rue Royale, and he dreaded the interview with the Duke. However, it had to be gone through. The rumour ran in the committee-rooms that Le Merquier had finished his report, a masterpiece of logic and ferocity, ending by recommending the invalidation of the Nabob's election, a measure that would be accomplished unless Mora, who was so powerful in the Assembly, came himself to his aid. A serious thing for the Nabob, that reddened his fevered cheeks, whilst, in the bevelled mirrors of his brougham, he studied his face, his courtier-like smiles, trying to prepare some clever manner of meeting the Duke.

On reaching the mansion by the road along the water, he was much astonished to note that the quay-porter was directing the carriages, as on great reception days, to go by the Rue de Lille, in order to leave a gate free for departing carriages. He thought, a little anxiously, "What's the matter?

Perhaps one of the Duchess's concerts, a charity sale, some fête from which Mora had excluded him because of the scandal of his last adventure." And his misgivings increased when, after crossing the court of honour amid the slamming of carriage-doors, a dull, continuous rumbling on the sand, Jansoulet found himself in the vast hall of the ante-room, filled with a crowd that did not pass beyond any of the inner doors, but was anxiously gathered about the porter's table, on which all the celebrated names of fashionable Paris were being inscribed. It appeared as if some disaster had visited the house, swept away a little of its grandiose calm, admitted disquiet and danger into its comfort.

"What a misfortune!"

"It's frightful!"

"And so suddenly."

The people, as they met, exchanged such words. Jansoulet quickly thought·

"Is the Duke ill?" he asked a servant.

"Ah! Monsieur, he is dying. He will not survive the night."

The Palace roof falling on his head would not have knocked Jansoulet over more completely. He saw red butterflies whirling, staggered, and dropped on a bench, his eyes staring at the flags, repeating aloud to himself: "I am done for—I am done for."

The Duke was dying. He had been suddenly taken ill on Sunday, on returning from the Bois. He had felt an intolerable burning in his intestines, which ran through his whole body as if with a red-hot iron, and alternated with a lethargic cold and long periods of coma. Jenkins, who was at once called in, did not say much, ordered some sedatives. Next day,

the pains began again, more violent, and followed by the same icy torpor, also more accentuated, as if life uprooted was departing in shocks. Those around him were not alarmed. "That's Sunday," they whispered in the ante-room, and Jenkins's handsome face kept calm. He had hardly spoken of the Duke's indisposition during his morning visits, and so lightly that no one had paid much heed to it.

Mora himself, in spite of his extreme weakness, although he felt his head absolutely empty, and, as he said, "without an idea in his forehead," was far from suspecting the gravity of his condition. But on the third day, when he awoke in the morning, the sight of a mere thread of blood which had flowed from his mouth on to his beard and reddened the pillow, startled the refined worldling, who had a horror of all human miseries, especially of illness. Monpavon, coming in behind Jenkins, surprised the suddenly troubled look of the grand seigneur face to face with the terrible truth, and was at the same time frightened at the ravages made in a few hours on Mora's emaciated face. He took Jenkins aside, whilst the servants brought the Duke the articles necessary for making his toilet on his bed, apparatuses of crystal and silver contrasting with the patient's yellow pallor.

"Look here, Jenkins, the Duke is very ill."

"I am afraid so," whispered the Irishman.

"Well, what's he got?"

"What he was trying for," said the other in a kind of rage. "One is not young at his age with impunity That passion will cost him dear."

An evil feeling triumphed in him which he at once silenced, and transformed. Swelling his face as if his

head were full of water, he sighed deeply as he shook the old gentleman's hands:

"Poor Duke—poor Duke. My friend, I am in despair."

"Take care, Jenkins," said Monpavon coldly, disengaging his hands. "You are assuming a fearful responsibility. What! the Duke is as bad as that, ps—ps— See nobody? No consultation?"

The Irishman raised his arms, as if to say: "What's the use?"

The other insisted. It was absolutely necessary to call in Brisset, Jousselin, Bouchereau, all the great doctors.

"But you will frighten him."

Monpavon inflated his chest, the only pride of the old, foundered racer:

"My dear sir, if you had seen Mora and me in the Constantinople trenches--ps—ps— Never shut his eyes—we don't know fear. Summon your colleagues; I take it on myself to inform him."

The consultation took place in the evening in perfect secrecy, at the demand of the Duke, who was singularly ashamed of being ill, of that suffering which uncrowned him, made him like other men. The consultation was what all consultations are: solemn and sinister. The scene here borrowed an imposing aspect from its surroundings. In the vast chamber, transformed, and, as it were, enhanced by the motionlessness of its master, those grave faces gathered round the bed, where the light was concentrated, illuminating in the whiteness of the linen and the purple of the curtains a deeply-furrowed head, pale from the lips to the eyes, but enveloped in serenity as in a veil, as in a shroud. The consultants talked in a low voice,

exchanged a furtive look, a barbarous word, remained impassive, without knitting their brows. But this mute and reserved expression, this solemnity with which science surrounds itself in order to conceal weakness or ignorance, had no power that could move the Duke.

Sitting on his bed, he went on quietly talking, with that rather uplifted look in which the thought seems to soar in order to flee, and Monpavon replied coldly, stiffened against his emotion, taking from his friend a last lesson in form, whilst Mora's servant, Louis, was leaning in the background against the door leading into the Duchess's apartments, like a spectre of silent domesticity, to whom indifferent aloofness is a duty.

The most agitated, feverish person was Jenkins.

Full of obsequious attention for "his illustrious *confrères*," as he magniloquently called them, he prowled about their council, tried to put his oar in; but his *confreres* kept him at a distance, hardly answered him, with haughtiness. Finally, when they had thoroughly examined, questioned their patient, they retired to consult in a small lacquered saloon, with glistening, coloured ceilings and walls, full of selected bibelots whose futility strangely contrasted with the importance of the discussion.

Solemn moment, the anguish of the accused awaiting the decision of his judges, life, death, reprieve or pardon!

With his long, white hand Mora continued stroking his moustache with a favourite gesture, talking with Monpavon about the Club, the foyer of the Variétés, asking for news about the Chamber, about the Nabob's election, all quite coldly, without the least affectation.

Then, no doubt fatigued, or fearing that his eyes, which were always directed to the tapestry before him, from behind which the decree of destiny would presently issue, should betray the emotion that needs must be felt in the depths of his soul, he laid his head back, shut his eyes, and only opened them when the doctors returned. They still retained the same cold and sinister faces, the faces of judges on whose lips is the terrible word of human destiny, the Final word, which the tribunals fearlessly pronounce, but which doctors, the whole of whose science it mocks at, elude and hint at periphrastically.

"Well, Messieurs, what does the Faculty say?" asked the patient.

A few lying encouragements, vague recommendations, were stammered out: then the three savants hurried off, to escape responsibility for this disaster. Monpavon dashed after them. Jenkins remained near the bed, crushed by the cruel truths he had just heard during the consultation. The Duke knew at once that neither Jenkins nor Louis would tell him the real result of the consultation. He did not insist with them, he even affected to share their confidence and believe in the good news they announced. But when Monpavon returned, he called him near his bed, and, as he saw the lie, visible even beneath the paint:

"Now, no grimaces, you know. Between you and me, the truth. What do they say? I am far gone, eh?"

Monpavon left an interval of significant silence before he answered: then, brutally, cynically, from fear of breaking down at the words:

"Done for, my poor Auguste!"

The Duke received the blow full in his face without wincing.

"Ah!"—that was all he said.

He twisted his moustache with a mechanical movement; but his features remained unmoved. And he made up his mind immediately.

In the first silence of that terrible minute, everything that made the Duke's life dear to him—power, honours, fortune, all that splendour—must have seemed to him already distant and in an irrevocable past. It required courage of a very exceptional stamp to bear up beneath such a blow, when there was no stimulus to his vanity. The only persons with him were his friend, the doctor, the servant: the lights, being removed, left the bed in the shadow, and the dying man might have turned to the wall, sorrowed over himself, without any one seeing him. But no. Not a second of weakness, of useless demonstrations. Without breaking one branch of the chestnuts in the garden, without withering one flower on the grand staircase of the Palace, Death, deadening his steps on the thick carpets, had just half opened the door of this mighty one and beckoned: "Come." And he answered simply: "I am ready." A genuine exit of the man of the world, unforeseen, rapid, and discreet.

A man of the world! Mora was nothing but that, and his sangfroid did not abandon him at the supreme moment. His mind fixed on the short space of time left him, he only thought of occupying it well and satisfying all the obligations devolving on such a death as his, which should leave no devotion unrewarded, nor compromise any friend. He gave a list of some people he wanted to see and who were at once sent for, summoned his chief secretary, and, when Jenkins considered he was fatiguing himself too much:

"Do you guarantee that I shall awake to-morrow

morning? I have an access of strength at this moment. Let me profit by it."

Louis asked if the Duchess should be informed. The Duke thought:

"Let's wait a bit still. I have something to finish."

He ordered the small lacquer table to be brought near his bed, in order to select himself the letters to be burnt; but, feeling his strength failing, he called to Monpavon: "Burn them all," he said, in an enfeebled voice; and seeing Monpavon approach the fire-place where the flames were shooting up, in spite of the fine weather·

"No—not there. There are too many of them. Someone might come."

Monpavon took up the light desk, motioned the valet to hold a lamp. But Jenkins came up.

"Remain here, Louis, the Duke may need you."

He took hold of the lamp; and, watching cautiously along the great corridor, looking into the waiting-rooms, the galleries whose fire-places were stuffed with artificial plants, and not a remnant of cinder, they wandered like ghosts in the silence and the darkness of the immense building.

"There's no fire anywhere. What are we to do with it all?" they asked each other in embarrassment. At last, Monpavon impatiently walked straight to a door, the only one they had not yet opened.

"By God! we can't help it. As we can't burn them, we must drown them. Lamp here, Jenkins."

They went in; and whilst the Marquis pumped, the other handed him the tattered letters, bundles of them. There were love-letters of all kinds, from the adventuress's note to the aristocratic reproaches of the mistress before the last, the complaints of the

deserted ones, and the still fresh page of recent intimacies. Suddenly Jenkins stopped in his destructive task. Two grey, satiny letters were quivering in his fingers.

"Who is this?" asked Monpavon, noticing the unknown hand and the nervous trouble of the Irishman. "Oh! doctor, if you are going to read everything, we shall never finish."

Jenkins, his cheeks inflamed, the two letters in his hand, was devoured by the wish to carry them away, to taste them at his leisure, to martyrise himself with delight whilst reading them, perhaps, also, to use them as a weapon against the imprudent woman who had signed them. But the Marquis's stiff bearing intimidated him. How was he to distract his attention, to get him away? The opportunity came of itself. Buried among the same papers, a little note, in a senile shaky handwriting, attracted the charlatan's curiosity, and he said with a naive air:

"Oh! oh! Here's one that does not look like a billetdoux. 'My dear Duke, help me, I am drowning. The Court of Accounts is again poking its nose into my affairs.'"

"What are you reading there?" queried Monpavon brusquely, snatching the letter from his hands. And suddenly, thanks to Mora's negligence in leaving about such intimate letters, he thought of the awful position in which he would be left by his protector's death. In his grief, he had not yet thought of it. He said to himself that, amid all the preparations for his departure, the Duke might well forget him; and, leaving Jenkins to finish alone the drowning of Juan's love epistles, he hurried back to the room. As he was about to go in, the noise of a discussion kept him

behind the tapestry of the door. It was Louis' voice, tearful as that of a beggar, trying to make the Duke pity his distressful condition, and asking to be allowed to take a few packets of gold coins that were in a drawer. Oh! the hoarse, exhausted, hardly intelligible reply, in which you felt the effort of the dying man, as he was obliged to turn in his bed, to detach his eyes from a horizon he already half saw.

"Yes, yes—take. But for God's sake let me sleep—let me sleep"

Drawers opened, closed; a short, panting breath. Monpavon heard no more and returned without entering. The servant's cruel rapacity had just awakened his pride. Anything rather than lower oneself like that!

The sleep which Mora desired so pressingly, or rather the lethargy, lasted the whole night and the following morning, with vague awakenings traversed by atrocious sufferings, which were each time relieved by soporifics The doctors no longer tended him medically; they only tried to alleviate his last moments, to get him to slide gently down that last terrible incline, the effort of which is so agonising. His eyes were meanwhile open, but already dim, staring in empty space at floating shadows, vague forms, such as a diver sees trembling in the water. On Thursday afternoon, about three, he completely woke up, and, recognising Monpavon, Cardailhac, two or three other inmates, he smiled, and revealed in a word his sole preoccupation:

"What do they say about it in Paris?"

Many things were said, diverse and contradictory; but, certainly, he was the sole subject of talk. The report had spread through the town that he was

dangerously ill, and there was everywhere the greatest excitement. For the Nabob, Mora's death meant his own death, his ruin, the end of all. He felt it so clearly that when he heard of the Duke's desperate condition, he had shown neither sorrow nor grimaces of any kind, but had uttered the ferocious word of human selfishness: "I am done for!" He saw his invalidation almost certain, and the consequences of it, bankruptcy, misery, and something worse, for when enormous riches crumble, they always retain among the ruins some part of a man's honour.

From time to time one of the intimates of the Palace, one of those whom the dying man had summoned, appeared in the crowd, gave an order, and departed, leaving the frightened expression of his face reflected on twenty others. Jenkins, too, showed himself a moment, his cravat untied, his waistcoat open, his cuffs crumpled, in all the disorder of the battle he was waging above against a terrible opponent. He was at once surrounded, pressed with questions. His grief was superb, a fine, strong, manly grief, which tightened his lips, made his chest pant.

"The agony has begun," he said mournfully. "It is now only a matter of hours."

And, as Jansoulet came up, he addressed him in emphatic tones:

"Ah! my friend, what a man!—what courage! He has forgotten no one. Only just now he was speaking to me about you."

"Really?"

"That poor Nabob," he said, "how is it with his election?"

And that was all. The Duke had said no more.

Jansoulet bowed his head. What was he hoping

for? Was it not enough that, at such a moment, a man like Mora should have thought of him? He returned to his bench, fell back into despair, after being galvanized by a moment of mad hope, and only noticed that he was the last visitor left, when he heard the common servants talking aloud in the waning light.

"I have had enough—I shan't be a servant again."

"I shall stay on with the Duchess——"

The Nabob wanted, before leaving, to write his name in the visitors' book. He approached the table, bent right over it to see better. The page was full. They showed him a blank space below a quite small, thready hand, and, when he had signed, Hemerlingue's name was seen by him to dominate his own, to crush it, to entwine it in an insidious flourish. Superstitious like all Latins, he was struck by the presage, carried the fear of it in his heart.

Where should he dine? At the Club? Place Vendôme? Hear people speaking about that death which obsessed him! He chose to go straight ahead, like all those who have a fixed thought which they hope to get rid of by walking. The evening was warm, perfumed, and he walked on. A noise of glasses and dishes coming from a restaurant gave him the idea of going in. He was hungry, the strong man. Gradually, the warmth of the meal comforted his heart. In the passage, he heard the waiters talking.

"Any news of Mora? It seems he is very ill."

"Go on with you! He will be all right soon. It's only those fellows who have luck!"

And hope is so firmly anchored in the human heart, that, despite all Jansoulet had seen and heard,

these few words, backed by two bottles of Burgundy and a few glasses of liqueur, were enough to restore his courage. After all, people had been known to recover from equally desperate conditions. "Shall I go and see?" He returned to Mora's house, full of illusions, appealing to that luck which had so often stood him in good stead. And, really, the aspect of the princely building had something that fortified his hope. It had the tranquil, reassuring look of ordinary evenings, from the lighted avenue, stately and deserted, to the porch, at the foot of which a large coach of antique shape was waiting.

In the anteroom, peaceful also, two enormous lamps were burning. A footman was sleeping in a corner, the porter was reading in front of the fire. He gazed at the new-comer over his spectacles, said nothing, and Jansoulet did not dare to ask anything. Presently, a quick gliding step, a whispered chant attracted his attention to a bent, white-haired old man, decorated with lace like an altar, murmuring a prayer as he went away with long priest-like steps, his red cassock trailing on the carpet. It was the Archbishop of Paris, accompanied by two assistants. The vision, with the murmuring like that of an icy breeze, passed quickly before Jansoulet, buried itself in the huge coach, and vanished, taking with it his last hope.

"Question of propriety, my dear fellow," said Monpavon, suddenly appearing near him. "Mora is an Epicurean, reared up in the ideas of—thingumbob—what's his name—eh? Eighteenth century. But very bad for the masses, if a man in his position—ps, ps, ps— Ah! he is the master of us all—ps, ps—irreproachable form!"

"Then it's all over?" said Jansoulet, overwhelmed. "There is no more hope?"

Monpavon signed to him to listen. A carriage was rumbling dully in the avenue of the Quay. The bell rang several times hurriedly The Marquis counted aloud—"One, two, three, four." At the fifth he got up:

"No hope now. There's the other coming," he said, alluding to the Parisian superstition that this visit of the Sovereign was always fatal to the dying. Lacqueys hurried about everywhere, opened the folding-doors, formed line, whilst the porter, with hat cocked, announced by sounding his pike on the flags the passage of two august shadows, whom Jansoulet perceived ascending the grand staircase, preceded by a valet carrying a candelabrum The woman went up straight and proud, enveloped in her black Spanish mantilla; the man clung to the baluster, going more slowly and wearily, his coat-collar turned up, his back, slightly bent, shaken by a convulsive sob.

"Let's go, Nabob. Nothing more to do here," said the old beau, taking Jansoulet by the arm and dragging him out. He stopped on the threshold, raising his hand, waved a little greeting with his gloved fingers towards the man who was dying in that room above: "Bye-bye, old boy." The gesture and the accent were of Society, irreproachable, but his voice trembled a little.

CHAPTER XVI

The Funeral

"Don't cry, my fairy, you deprive me of all my courage. Come, now! You will be much happier when you have not got your frightful demon. You will go back to Fontainebleau and look after your fowls. Brahim's ten thousand francs will help to set you going; and besides, don't be afraid: once there, I shall send you money. As the Bey wants my sculpture, I shall make him pay, you bet. I shall become again rich, rich. Who knows? Perhaps a sultana!"

"Yes, you will be a sultana; but I shall be dead, and I shall never see you again."

And the dear Crenmitz in despair cramped herself in a corner of the cab, to hide her tears.

Felicia was leaving Paris. She was trying to escape the horrible gloom, the fearful despair in which she had just been plunged by Mora's death. What a terrible blow for the proud girl! Ennui, spite, had thrown her into the man's arms; she had given up everything, pride, shame, and behold! he had taken it all with him, leaving her behind, soiled for life--a widow without tears, without mourning, without dignity. Two or three visits to St James', a few evenings spent in the corner of a box in a second-

rate theatre, where forbidden, shameful pleasure cloisters itself those were the sole memories left by that fortnight's liaison, that loveless sin, in which even her pride had not been able to gratify itself by the *éclat* of a splendid scandal. A useless and indelible stain, the stupid fall into the middle of the gutter of a woman who knows not how to walk, and whom the ironical pity of the passers-by hinders from rising up again

For an instant she thought of suicide, then the idea that it would be attributed to a broken heart stopped her. She saw beforehand the sentimental pity of Society, the silly figure her pretended passion would cut amid the innumerable lovers of the Duke, and the Parma violets strewn by the effeminate Moessards of journalism on her tomb, dug so near the other one The alternative was travel, one of those journeys so distant that they alter even the thoughts. Unfortunately she had no money. Then she remembered that the day after her great success at the Exhibition, old Brahim Bey had come to see her, to make, in his master's name, magnificent proposals to her for great works to be executed in Tunis. She then said no, and did not let herself be tempted by Oriental prices, a splendid hospitality, the finest court of the Bards for a studio. But now she thought differently. She had only to make a sign, the bargain was at once struck, and, after an exchange of telegrams, a hasty packing and closing of her house, she went off to the station as if for a week's absence, astonished herself at her prompt decision, flattered in all the adventurous and artistic ideas of her nature by the hope of a new life in an unknown climate.

The Bey's pleasure-yacht was to await her at Genoa, and, now closing her eyes in the cab, she saw the white stones of an Italian harbour enclasping an iridescent sea, where the sun had already Oriental brightness, where everything sang, even to the swelling of sails on the blue. On this precise day Paris was muddy, uniformly grey, deluged by one of those continuous downpours that seem made for Paris alone. Felicia burnt to flee from the gloomy town, and in her feverish impatience she was angry with the coachman, who was not getting on with the horses, two regular crocks, with the inexplicable crowd of carriages, omnibuses that blocked the way near the Pont de la Concorde.

"Go on, coachman, go on."

"I can't, madame -- it's the burial."

She put her head out of the window, and at once withdrew it, terrified. A line of soldiers walking with guns reversed, a confusion of helmets, of hats raised on the passage of an interminable procession. It was the funeral of Mora going by.

"Don't stop here -go round," she cried to the coachman.

The cab turned with difficulty, tearing itself regretfully away from the superb spectacle Paris had been awaiting for four days. What tortures for Felicia! It was her sin and her remorse that were crossing Paris in this solemn pomp, this funeral cortège, this public mourning, reflected even in the clouds; and the proud girl revolted against the affront of fate, and buried herself inside the cab, where she remained with her eyes closed, overwhelmed. At last, after countless windings, the cab suddenly stopped, rolled on again amid shouts and insults, was hustled

lifted up, the baggage on the roof threatening to fall off, and finally stopped.

"Good God! what a crowd!" murmured the frightened Crenmitz.

Felicia woke from her torpor:

"Where are we now?"

Beneath a colourless, smoky sky, streaked by thin rain, stretched a huge square, covered by a human ocean flowing in from all the abutting streets, motionless around a high bronze column that dominated these billows like the gigantic mast of a stranded ship. Squadrons of cavalry, sabre in hand, batteries of cannon, a fierce escort awaiting him who would soon be passing.

"Get on. I don't want to stop here," cried Felicia, furiously, gripping the driver's wet cloak, seized with a mad terror of the nightmare that was pursuing her. But, at the first movement of the cab, the cries, the hootings began again. The driver could neither advance nor retreat. They must, therefore, stay where they were, endure the breaths of the rabble and the stink of alcohol, and their inquisitive eyes, brightening beforehand for a magnificent spectacle.

Suddenly, a great shout: "Here he is!" Then a silence over the whole square.

He was coming.

Felicia's first impulse was to let down the blind on her side, the side where the procession was to pass. But, as the drums began to roll quite near her, seized by a nervous rage that she could not escape the obsession, perhaps also influenced by the unhealthy curiosity of the crowd, she suddenly pulled up the blind, and rested her small, burning, pale face on her two hands at the window:

"Oh! you wish it. I am looking at you."

It was the finest funeral imaginable, the last honours, in all their empty splendour, as sonorous, as hollow, as the rhythmic accompaniment of the asses' skins covered with crape. First, white-surpliced, the clergy, in five mourning coaches, then, drawn by six black horses, the funeral car, plumed, fringed, embroidered with silver, heavy silver tears, with heraldic coronets surmounting gigantic M's. On the coffin, a sword a uniform, an embroidered hat, parade trappings which had never been used, glistened with gold and mother of pearl in the sombre recess of the hangings among the brilliance of the fresh spring flowers. Then came the Duke's servants, an officer bearing the Duke's insignia, and the master of the ceremonies, walking before the deputation of the Legislative Body, a dozen deputies, chosen by lot, in the middle of them the Nabob's tall figure in official costume, worn for the first time, as if ironical fate had wished to give the potential representative a foretaste of all parliamentary delights. The friends of the defunct, who followed, were very limited in numbers, singularly well-chosen to expose the superficiality and emptiness of the existence of a great personage, whose intimate friends were reduced to a thrice-bankrupt theatre manager, a picture-dealer enriched by usury, a discredited gentleman, and a few unknown fast men.

Then came the carriages, Mora's larger carriage, its panels hung with black, its lamps covered with long, light crape, floating to the ground with a certain wavy feminine grace. It was a new funeral fashion, the supreme "chic" of mourning; and it well suited that dandy to give a last lesson in elegance to the Parisians. Next came three more masters of ceremonies, and

then the impassive official pomp, an interminable cortège of gala coaches, glittering, with large windows, showy liveries laden with gilt, that made the people cry "Oh," as they do at fire-work displays.

Indifference! That was the marked characteristic of the funeral, from the functionaries and priests to the private friends and servants. Indifferent was M. Louis, whose last day of servitude it was, a slave who had become enfranchised, rich enough to pay his ransom. Old Monpavon, though struck in his very heart, would have thought it a deplorable lack of form, quite unworthy of his illustrious friend, to have shown the least bend of his linen cuirass and his tall figure. His eyes were dry, as glittering as ever. Yet there was some one who wept, among the members of the deputation; but he was sorrowing very naively over himself. Poor Nabob, his heart was softened by the bands, the pomp, it seemed to him he was burying all his fortune, all his aspirations for glory and honours. And that was another variety of indifference.

The procession still went on, more wearying than dismal: choral societies, deputations from the army and navy, empty private carriages, followed by troops, infantry, dragoons, lancers, carbineers, heavy guns with their throats open to the sky, ready to bark, shaking the pavements and windows, but unable to drown the wild, sinister rolling of the drums.

"Now and at the hour of our death. Amen," murmured Crenmitz, whilst the cab rumbled across the emptying square, where the golden statue of Liberty seemed to take a magic flight in space; and the old dancer's prayer was perhaps the only heart-

felt and sincere note uttered during the passing of the immense obsequies.

All the speeches were over, three long speeches as icy as the vault into which the dead man had just descended, three official declamations that gave the orators an opportunity to loudly proclaim their devotion to the interests of the Dynasty. Short and heavy, dragging along his swollen legs with difficulty, Hemerlingue was hastening towards the exit of the cemetery, resisting the offers made him to return in the various carriages, knowing well that his own alone could hold him.

"Baron, Baron, this way—there's a seat for you."

"No, thank you. I am going to walk off my stiffness."

And in order to avoid these proposals, which began to annoy him, he went along an almost deserted avenue, too deserted even for the Baron's comfort. Since he had entered the cemetery, he had been afraid of meeting Jansoulet, whose violence he well knew, and who might be tempted to renew the outrage of the Rue Royale. There, in the grand avenue, there would have been people present, in case of an accident, whilst here—Brr. That was the anxiety that made him force the pace, panting as he was; but in vain. As he turned round in his fear of being followed, the Nabob's high, robust shoulders came into view at the entrance of the avenue. Hemerlingue, finding he could not escape, walked on with an indifferent air, fancying that the other would perhaps not recognise him. But a hoarse, powerful voice shouted behind him:

"Lazare!"

That millionaire was called Lazare. He gave no

reply, tried to get up to a group of officers, who were walking in front of him, a long way off.

"Lazare! Hi! Lazare!"

As he once used to shout on the quay at Marseilles. All at once an iron hand roughly gripped Hemerlingue. A cold sweat of cowardice distilled from all his flabby limbs, his face became yet yellower, his eyes blinked at the fearful blow he expected, whilst he instinctively raised his fat arms to parry it. "Oh! don't be afraid —I don't wish you any harm," said Jansoulet, sadly— "I have only come to ask you not to do me any more."

He stopped to take breath. The banker, dazed, frightened, opened his round owls'-eyes at Jansoulet's suffocating emotion.

"Listen, Lazare, you are the stronger at this war we have been so long waging. I am right down on the ground, knocked out Now, be generous, spare your old pal. Be merciful to me, I say, be merciful."

The unnerved Southerner, with feelings softened by the funeral ceremony, was quivering all over. Hemerlingue, facing him, was hardly braver. The gloomy music, the open grave, the speeches, the cannonade, and the high philosophy of inevitable death, had moved the fat Baron's bowels. His old comrade's voice had succeeded in awakening what human element remained in that parcel of gelatine.

His old pal! This was the first time for ten years, since their quarrel, that he had seen him again so near. What a number of adventures together those sun-burnt features, those strong shoulders, so ill-suited for his embroidered coat, recall! How can two men quarrel, who know each other so well, who had lived like twins suckling a thin, strong nurse, poverty, and have shared

her soured milk and her rude caresses! Such thoughts aroused Hemerlingue's brain, like lightning. Almost instinctively he let his heavy hand fall into the Nabob's. Something animal stirred in them, stronger than their rancour, and these two men, who had been trying for ten years to ruin, to disgrace each other, began to talk with open heart.

"You are not in a hurry, are you?" asked Jansoulet. "We might walk a bit, if you like. It is not raining now; the weather is fine. One feels twenty years younger."

"Yes, it gives one a pleasant feeling," said Hemerlingue; "but I can't walk much—my legs are heavy."

"I forgot your poor legs. Come along, there's a seat over there. Let's sit down there. Lean on me, old boy."

And the Nabob led him with brotherly care to one of the benches among the tombs. He helped him to the seat, watched him affectionately, pitied his infirmity, and, by an easy transition in such a place, they began to talk about their health, about approaching age. The one was dropsical, the other liable to rushes of blood to the head. Both of them took Jenkins' Pearls, a dangerous remedy, as Mora's rapid death proved.

"My poor Duke!" said Jansoulet.

"A great loss to the country," added the banker in sympathetic tones.

And the Nabob, naively:

"To me especially, to me, for if he had lived—— Ah! you are lucky, you are lucky."

Fearing he had hurt his feelings, he quickly added:

"And besides, you are strong, very strong."

The Baron looked at him, winking his eye, and so quaintly that his small black lashes vanished in his yellow grease.

"No," he said, "it is not I who am strong. It's Marie."

"Marie?"

"Yes, the Baroness. Since her baptism, she has dropped the name of Yamina for that of Marie. She's a real woman. She knows the bank better than I, and Paris, and business. She manages everything in the firm."

"You are very happy," sighed Jansoulet.

His melancholy was an eloquent commentary on Mademoiselle Afchin. Then, after a long silence, the Baron went on:

"Marie is very angry with you, you know. She will not like to hear that we have talked together."

He knitted his large brows, as if he regretted their reconciliation, at the thought of the conjugal scene that would ensue. Jansoulet stammered:

"I have not done her any harm."

"Come, come, you have not been very nice to her. Think of the affront she received on our marriage visit. Your wife sending word that she was not at home to ex-slaves. As if our friendship should not be stronger than a prejudice. Women don't forget."

"But I have nothing to do with it, old boy. You know how haughty the Afchins are."

He at any rate was not haughty, poor man. He had such a piteous, suppliant mien before his friend's frown, that the latter pitied him. The cemetery was really softening that Baron.

"Listen to me, Bernard; there's only one thing to do. If you want us to be pals as before, you must obtain

forgiveness from my wife. When Mademoiselle Afchin refused to see us, you let her do so, eh? If, when I return, Marie said to me: 'I don't want you to be friends,' it would be the same with me. All my protests would not prevent me from shoving you overboard. Friendship counts for nothing in such cases. The best thing is to have peace at home."

"But then, what should I do?" asked the Nabob in terror.

"I'll tell you. The Baroness is at home every Saturday. Come with your wife and pay us a visit the day after to-morrow. You will meet the best society in Paris. We won't speak of the past. The ladies will talk chiffons and toilettes. And the thing will be over. We shall become friends again as before; and, as you are in a hole, well! I'll drag you out of it."

"You think so? I am in a dreadful hole," said the other.

Again did Hemerlingue's cunning eyes vanish between his cheeks, like two flies in butter:

"Jove! I should think so. I played for all I was worth. You are not without skill. The coup of lending the Bey fifteen millions was first-rate. You had an inspiration; only you hold your cards badly. You show your hand."

Hemerlingue rejoiced to see his friend so humble, gave him advice about his affairs, which he seemed to know thoroughly. According to him, the Nabob might still get out of his hole very advantageously. Everything depended on the validation of the election. But Jansoulet had lost self-confidence. Losing Mora, he had lost everything.

"You lose Mora, but you find me again. That is an equivalent," said the banker coolly.

"No, look here, it's impossible. It's too late. Le Merquier has finished his report It seems it's dreadful."

"Well! if he has finished his report, he will have to draw up another less malevolent."

"What do you mean?"

The Baron looked at him in amazement:

"But your brain is degenerating. Give him one, two, three hundred thousand francs, if necessary."

"Do you think so? Le Merquier, that honourable man. 'My conscience,' as he is called."

This time Hemerlingue's laugh burst forth with extraordinary loudness, re-echoed in the depths of the neighbouring mausoleums, little used to such want of respect.

"'My conscience' an honest man. You amuse me. You don't know that that conscience belongs to me, and that——"

He stopped, looked behind him, a little upset by a noise he heard:

"Listen."

It was the echo of his laughter from the bottom of a vault, as if even the dead were amused at the idea of Le Merquier's conscience.

"Let us walk a bit," he said. "It's getting chilly here."

Then, as they walked among the tombs, he explained to him, with a certain pedantic foolishness, that in France bribes play as important a part as in the East. Only there was more ceremony about it.

"Le Merquier, for instance. Instead of giving him your money right out, as you would to a seraskier, the thing is arranged. He likes pictures. He is always dealing with Schawalbch, who uses him to allure

Catholic customers. Well! you offer him a picture, a souvenir to hang on a panel of his private room. The whole thing lies in the price. But you will see; I shall take you to him myself. I shall show you how it's done."

And quite happy at the amazement of the Nabob, who, in order to flatter him more, exaggerated his stupefaction, opened his eyes admiringly, the Baron enlarged on his lesson, giving him a regular course of Parisian and worldly philosophy.

Finally, "Let's go!" said the two old pals, who had gradually begun to feel the twilight chilliness; but, before leaving, Hemerlingue, pursuing his thought, pointed to the monument of Mora winged with draperies in its four corners, and the outstretched hands of its sculptured figures:

"See! the dead man there knew how to do things."

Jansoulet took his arm, to help him down.

"Oh! yes, he was strong. But you, you are stronger than any of them," he said in his awful Gascon accent.

Hemerlingue did not protest.

"I owe my wife everything. Therefore I bind you to make your peace with her, because otherwise——"

"Oh! don't be afraid—we shall come on Saturday —but you must take me to Le Merquier."

CHAPTER XVII

The Baroness Hemerlingue.

Right at the end of the long archway under which were the offices of Hemerlingue & Son, a monumental staircase, with a baluster of wrought iron, led, on the left, to the Baroness' reception-rooms. There was mingled in them a vague flavour of the sacristy with the bustle of the Bourse and the most refined worldliness, heterogeneous elements that met there continually, but remained separate, just as the Seine separates the noble Catholic faubourg, under whose patronage the famous conversion of the Moslem woman had taken place, from the financial district in which Hemerlingue lived. The Levantine society, fairly numerous in Paris, composed largely of German Jews, bankers and commission-agents, who, after making colossal fortunes in the East, go on with their business so as not to lose the habit of it, were very assiduous at the Baroness' 'at homes.' Tunisians passing through Paris never failed to visit the wife of the great banker in favour with the Bey.

Yet there was a blemish in the past life of the Baroness. She was formerly a slave: bought at the Adrianople bazaar for the Emperor of Morocco, then, at the Emperor's death, and the dispersal of his harem,

sold to the young Bey Ahmed. Hemerlingue married her when she left this new seraglio, but could not secure her reception by any woman in Tunis, whether Moor, Turk, or European, who would not meet an ex-slave on an equal footing. The Hemerlingues found the same invincible repugnance even in Paris, where foreign colonies form small cliques, full of susceptibilities and local traditions. So Yamina spent two or three years in complete solitude, during which she made good use of all her bitterness and of her leisure hours, for she was an ambitious woman, with wonderful will and pertinacity. She learnt French thoroughly, gave up her embroidered vests and rose-silk trousers, fitted her figure and walk to European dress, then, one evening at the opera, she showed the admiring Parisians a face which was still rather barbaric, but refined, elegant and original.

The sacrifice of her religion ensued close upon that of her dress. Madame Hemerlingue had long given up all Mahometan practices, when Maître Le Merquier, the intimate of the family and her guide in Paris, pointed out that the Baroness' solemn conversion would open the doors of that set in Parisian society, access to which seems to have become more and more difficult, in proportion as society around it has become democratised. The Faubourg Saint-Germain once conquered, all the rest would follow. And, indeed, when, after the sensation made by her baptism, the greatest names in France did not disdain to call on the Baroness' Saturdays, Mesdames Gügenheim, Fuernberg, Caraiscaki, Maurice Trott, all wives of befezzed millionaires renowned in the markets of Tunis, abjuring their prejudices, begged to be admitted to the ex-slave's house. Madame

Jansouiet alone protested against what she termed the indecency, the cowardice, of such a proceeding, and affirmed that she at any rate would never set foot in 'that thing's' house. There was then a slight retrograde movement among Mesdames Gugenheim and the rest; they had gone too far to retreat, but insisted upon letting Marie feel more keenly the price of their condescension, the sacrifice of their prejudices, and the Baroness understood well the shade of meaning in the protecting tone of the Levantines, who addressed her as 'My dear child—My good friend,' with a rather contemptuous loftiness. Thenceforth her hatred against the Jansoulets knew no bounds.

You may imagine, then, the surprise, the excitement, in that exotic corner of society, when the news spread that not only the fat Afchin—as the ladies called her—had consented to visit the Baroness, but that she was going to pay her first visit the next Saturday. Neither the Fuernbergs nor the Trotts would have dreamt of missing such a scene. The Baroness, on her side, did everything to lend this solemn reparation the greatest possible éclat, wrote, visited, so busied herself, that, though the season was already far advanced, Madame Jansoulet, on reaching the house in Faubourg Saint-Honoré, might have seen, at about four o'clock, before the arched gateway, a crowd of carriages and liveries of well-known and distinguished people.

Upstairs, in the reception-rooms, there was the usual bizarre and vainglorious gathering. There was a coming and going on the carpets of the two first empty rooms, a passing of rustling silks, up to the boudoir occupied by the Baroness. In order to amuse the various sets of society women, to keep her

salon full until the famous interview, she kept changing her seat, putting in a word in ten different conversations, raising her harmonious and velvety voice to the warbling diapason that distinguishes Oriental women, coaxing and caressing, her mind supple as her waist, talking on every subject, and duly mingling fashion and charity sermons, theatres and sales, milliner and confessor. A great personal charm was united to the acquired science of a mistress of the house, a science visible even in her simple black dress, which brought out her cloister-like pallor, her houri's eyes, her shiny, plaited hair, parted over a narrow, pure forehead. She was perfect mistress of herself, as are all those whom the custom of a veil covering the eyes has habituated to lying, without danger or scruple.

No one at that moment would have suspected the anguish that tormented her, on seeing her kneeling by a grand dame, a princess, a good old woman sans façon, of whom Madame Fuernberg used always to say: "If that's a princess!"

"Oh, I implore you, godmother, don't go yet."

"Well," said the good lady, pointing to a stately Armenian, silent and grave, his tasselled hat on his knees, "I have to take this poor Monseigneur to the Grand Saint-Christophe to buy some medals. He would never do without me."

"Yes, yes, I wish it. A few minutes more."

And the Baroness cast a furtive glance at the sumptuous old clock in a corner of the salon.

It was five, and the fat Afchin had not come yet. The Levantines began to laugh behind their fans. Hemerlingue, who, on Saturdays, sometimes left his office to make his bow to the ladies, was drinking a

glass of Madeira, whilst talking with Maurice Trott, Said-Pacha's late bathing-man, when his wife approached, still sweet and calm. He knew what wrath was hidden by that impenetrable tranquillity, and whispered timidly:

"Nobody?"

"Nobody. You see to what an affront you are exposing me"

She smiled, her eyes half-lowered, picking with the tips of her nails a bit of cake from his long, black whiskers; but her small, transparent nostrils were quivering with a terrible eloquence.

"Oh! she'll come," said the banker, his mouth full. "I am sure she'll come."

Already a few persons, who took no interest in the great event, were on the point of going away. And the Jansoulets had not come.

Suddenly there was a robust, hurried step. The Nabob appeared, by himself, in a black frock-coat, correctly cravated and gloved, but with agitated face, haggard eye, still trembling from the terrible scene he had been through.

She had refused to come.

In the morning he had told her maids to dress Madame for three o'clock, as he did every time he took the indolent Levantine with him anywhere. He relied upon her lazy good-humour to take her to the Hemerlingues. So, when he was dressed after lunch, he sent to ask if Madame would soon be ready, but she sent word that she was not going out. The affair was serious, so serious, that he at once rushed up the stairs and entered the cushioned rooms of the Levantine, like the blast of the mistral. She was still in bed, dressed in the big, open tunic in two-coloured silk,

which the Moors call a djebba, and on her head was a little gold-embroidered cap, from which flowed her beautiful black hair, scattered around her moon-like face, which was inflamed by the meal she had just finished.

"How is it you are not dressed yet?" asked Jansoulet furiously. "Didn't they tell you we were going out?"

"We'll go out to-morrow," she answered, sleepily.

"To-morrow! Impossible! We are expected to-day. A most important visit."

"Where?"

He hesitated a moment, then:

"To Hemerlingue's."

She raised her big eyes to him, convinced he was joking. Then he told her of his meeting the Baron at Mora's funeral, and the agreement they had made together.

"Go if you like," she said coldly; "but you know me very little if you imagine that I, a Demoiselle Afchin, shall ever set foot in that slave's house."

"Come now," said the Nabob to his wife, "I see that you don't know in what a terrible position I am. Listen——"

Without minding the maids or the negresses in the rooms, with that sovereign indifference of the Oriental for his servants, he began to draw a picture of his dire distress, his fortune seized in Tunis, his credit lost in Paris, the influence of the Hemerlingues on the reporting advocate, and the obligatory sacrifice at such a crisis of all amour-propre to such powerful interests. He spoke with warmth, anxious to convince her. But she replied simply: "I shall not go," as if it were a matter of an unimportant drive, a little too long for her.

He trembled all over.

"Come now, you must not say that. Reflect that my fortune, the future of our children, the name you bear, are all involved. Everything is at stake on this step which you surely cannot refuse to take."

He might have spoken for hours. A Demoiselle Afchin could not visit a slave.

"Well! Madame," he said vehemently, "that slave is worth more than you. By her intelligence, she has multiplied her husband's fortune tenfold, whilst you, on the contrary——"

He stopped, changed his tone, knelt before her bed, and, with that jocular tenderness which one uses towards children, he said:

"My own little Martha, I implore you. Get up and dress. It's for your own self I ask it, for your comfort, for your luxury. What would become of you if, owing to a caprice, a naughty piece of obstinacy, we were to find ourselves in abject poverty?"

The word "poverty" represented absolutely nothing to the Levantine. They might speak of it before her as about death before quite little children. She was not perturbed, not knowing what it was. Besides, she resolutely intended to stop in bed in her djebba. At last, before her refusal, her silence, her stubborn forehead, Jansoulet gave rein to his anger, stood up at his full height:

"That's enough," he said, "I will it."

He turned to the negresses:

"Dress your mistress at once."

And boor as he was at bottom, the son of the Southern nail-seller, in his passion, threw back the bed-covering with a brutal scornful gesture, hurling on the ground the innumerable knick-knacks upon it, and

compelled the half-nude Levantine to jump on her feet with a quickness astonishing in that bulky person. She roared under the outrage, wrapped her thin bust in the folds of her tunic, put on her little cap over her dishevelled locks, and started abusing her husband.

"Never, you understand, never. You will have to drag me to the——"

Filth flowed in a flood from her heavy lips, as from a sewer's mouth. She stood revealed, a Levantine of a seaport town, who has heard sailors levelling vile abuse and insult at one another, and has remembered every dirty word. The unhappy Nabob gazed at her, terrified, overwhelmed by what she made him hear, and by her grotesque person foaming at the mouth and raving:

"No, I shan't go—I shan't go."

Suddenly, at the thought that his fate was in that woman's hands, that it would only cost her the putting on of a dress to save him, and that the time was passing, and soon it would be too late, a criminal impulse rushed to his brain, distorted his features. He went straight up to her, his hands open and fingers clenched, with so menacing an aspect, that the Demoiselle Afchin rushed away in a panic, calling out towards the door by which the shampooer had just left:

"Aristide!"

That cry, that voice, that intimacy of his wife with a servant! Jansoulet stopped, sobered from his anger, then with a gesture of disgust rushed out slamming the doors.

A quarter of an hour later he was at Hemerlingue's, made, as he entered, a mournful sign to the banker, and approached the Baroness, stammering the ready-made

phrase—"His wife severely indisposed—extremely regretted she could not——" She did not give him time to finish, rose slowly, uncoiled herself like a long adder in the draperies of her close-fitting dress, and said, without looking at him, in her most correct tone: "Oh! *I* know—*I* know"—then changed her seat, and did not trouble about him any more. He tried to approach Hemerlingue, but he appeared very deep in his talk with Maurice Trott.

The company was leaving. Madame Hemerlingue accompanied a few of the ladies to the door, found with perfect ease the proper word of farewell for each guest. The salon became empty by degrees. At last there were only two or three ladies whom Jansoulet did not know, among whom the mistress of the house seemed to shelter herself from him. But Hemerlingue was free, and the Nabob joined him just when he was stealthily making off to his office; and once on the landing, fat Hemerlingue, who was very cold, very distant, so long as he was under his wife's eye, resumed a more frank expression.

"It's a terrible pity," he said, in a low voice, as if he feared to be overheard, "that Madame Jansoulet refused to come."

Jansoulet replied by a movement of despair and wild powerlessness.

"Terrible pity—terrible pity!"—repeated the other, panting, and looking in his pocket for the key.

"Look here, old chap," said the Nabob, taking his hand: "There's no reason why, because our wives don't get on together, we should not remain pals. What a nice little chat the other day, eh?"

"Yes, yes," replied the Baron, withdrawing his hand to open the door, which moved noiselessly.

"Now, good-bye; I must leave you. I have letters yet to write to-night."

"Ya didou, Moucı" (I say, Monsieur), said the poor Nabob, trying to joke and using the Sabir patois, in order to remind his old 'pal' of the pleasant memories of two days before, "our visit to Le Merquier still stands? The picture we are to offer him, you know. What day would suit you?"

"Oh! yes, Le Merquier. That's right. Well, some early date I'll write."

"You won't forget?—you know it's urgent."

"Yes, yes, I'll write—Good-bye."

And the fat man shut his door quickly, as if afraid his wife might catch him.

Two days later, the Nabob received a note from Hemerlingue:

"My dear old friend,—I cannot manage to accompany you to Le Merquier's. Too much business just now. Besides, will be better if alone for talking. Go boldly there. You are expected Rue Cassette, any morning, 8 to 10.—Yours cordially, HEMERLINGUE."

Below, as a postscript, there was written very legibly: "A religious picture, as far as possible!"

What was he to think of the letter? Was it real goodwill or polite refusal merely? He had no time to hesitate. So one morning Jansoulet pulled himself together, for Le Merquier frightened him a good deal, and went to call upon him.

In the Rue Cassette, in the neighbourhood of the Catholic Club, to whose chairmanship he had just been elected, lived Maître Le Merquier, a barrister, the deputy for Lyons, the agent of all the great French religious communities, whom Hemerlingue, by an inspiration which was very profound for that fat man,

had entrusted with the interests of his firm. On being ushered into the anteroom, the Nabob found several persons already waiting there, despite the early hour—a Dominican friar striding up and down, with an ascetic and serene face, two good sisters hidden under their coifs, counting their beads, priests of the Lyonnese diocese, recognisable by the shape of their hats, and other religious-looking and severe individuals, who sat round the big wooden table in the middle of the room and were turning over the leaves of some of the edifying journals that are printed on the hill of Fourvières. At last his turn came to go in.

M. Le Merquier was sitting in a large, simple and severe closet, that was a suitable frame for one of his professedly austere principles, and for his thin, long, bent, narrow shouldered person, inclosed in an eternal black coat, always too short in the sleeves, from which issued two dark hands, square and flat. The clerical deputy had the muddy complexion of the Lyonnese, and a certain life in his expression due to his double look, sometimes sparkling, but impenetrable behind the glass of his spectacles, but generally quick, suspicious, and dark above those same spectacles, made darker by the re-entering shadow which the raised eyes, the lowered head, gave to the arch of the brows.

After a reception almost cordial in comparison with the cold salute exchanged by the two colleagues in the Chamber, an "I was expecting you," in which there was perhaps an insinuation, the barrister pointed to the armchair near his desk, told his servant not to disturb them, arranged a few scattered papers, after which, crossing his legs, he sank into his armchair like a man who disposes himself to listen, to be all

ears. He rested his chin on his hand, fixed his eyes on a heavy green rep curtain that fell to the floor opposite him. The moment was decisive, the position embarrassing. But Jansoulet did not hesitate.

"Do not be astonished, my dear colleague"—his voice trembled, but it soon became strong again as he went on with his defence—"Do not be astonished if I have come to see you here, instead of simply asking to be heard in the third committee-room. The explanations I have to give you are of so delicate and confidential a nature that it would have been impossible to give them in a public place, in the presence of my assembled colleagues."

M. Le Merquier looked over his spectacles at the curtain, with a dismayed air. The talk was evidently taking an unforeseen turn.

"The essence of the question I shall not deal with," resumed the Nabob. "Your report, I am sure, is impartial and loyal, as your conscience would dictate. But there have been spread abroad, in regard to me, sickening slanders to which I have not replied, and which may perhaps have influenced the opinion of the committee. It is about that I want to speak. I know the confidence with which you are honoured by your colleagues, M. Le Merquier, and that, when I shall have convinced you, your word will suffice without my having to exhibit painful family matters before every one. You know the accusation. I am speaking of the most awful, most ignoble of all. There are so many, that you might pitch upon the wrong one. My foes have given dates, names, addresses. Well! I bring you the proofs of my innocence. I lay them before you, before you alone,

for I have serious reasons for keeping the whole thing secret."

He then showed the barrister a certificate from the Consulate at Tunis, that in twenty years he had only left the principality twice, the first time to go and see his father, who was dying at Bourg-Saint-Andéol; the second, to pay a three days' visit with the Bey to his château at Saint-Romans.

"How is it that with such clear proof in my hands I did not summon my insulters before the tribunals, in order to give them the lie and to confound them? Alas! Monsieur, there are certain cruel solidarities in families. I have a brother, a poor, weak, spoiled creature, who rolled many years in the mud of Paris, left his intelligence and his honour there. Did he ever sink so low as to do that of which I am accused? I have not dared to look into it. What I state is that my poor father, who knew more about it than anybody in the house, whispered to me, as he was dying: 'Bernard, your eldest brother is killing me. I am dying of shame, my child.'"

He made a pause, which his stifling emotion rendered necessary, then:

"My father is dead, Maître Le Merquier, but my mother is alive, and it is for her, for her peace of mind, that I have recoiled, that I still recoil from the scandal my justification would stir up. Indeed, up till now, the dirt which has been thrown at me has not reached her. But an action would mean the advertising of our misfortune from one end of France to the other, the *Messager's* articles reproduced by all the papers, even by those of the little district in which my mother lives. It would be too much for her; it would kill her. And truly I think

one death is enough. That's why I have had the courage to be silent, to weary, if possible, my enemies by silence. But I have need of a sponsor in the Chamber. I don't want to give them the right to reject me for dishonourable motives; and since you have been chosen as reporter, I have come to tell you everything, begging you not to divulge any of this conversation, even in the interests of my cause—I only ask of you, my dear colleague, absolute discretion; for the rest, I rely on your justice and loyalty."

He rose, was about to leave, and Le Merquier did not budge, still questioning the green tapestry in front of him, as if he sought there an inspiration for his reply. Finally:

"It shall be done as you desire, my dear colleague. These confidences will remain between ourselves. You have said nothing, I have heard nothing."

The Nabob, still quite carried away by his own eloquence, which seemed to him to call for a hearty reply, an emotional handshake, felt himself seized by a strange uneasiness. That coldness, that absent-minded look embarrassed him so much that he was already making for the door, with an awkward bow, when the other detained him.

"Wait a moment, my dear colleague. In what a hurry you are to leave me! Stop a few minutes, I beg of you. I am only too happy to talk with a man like you, the more so as we have more than one common interest. Our friend Hemerlingue told me that you were very fond of pictures, like me."

Jansoulet started. The two words, "Hemerlingue" and "pictures," occurring in the same phrase and so unexpectedly, relieved him of any perplexity he had,

Still, he did not come at once to the point, and let Le Merquier feel the ground for his hesitating advances. People had spoken a great deal to him about his honourable colleague's gallery. Would it be indiscreet to beg the favour of being admitted to——?

"Why! I should be only too happy," said the Nabob, tickled in the most sensitive spot—because it had been the most expensive—of his vanity; and looking round him at the walls of the cabinet, he added in the tone of a connoisseur: "You, too, possess some beautiful pictures."

"Oh!" said the other, modestly, "only a few canvases. Pictures are so dear now-a-days. It is such a costly taste to gratify—a regular millionaire's hobby—a Nabob's passion," he said smiling, with a furtive glance over his spectacles.

They were both prudent players, face to face; but Jansoulet was a bit "out of it" in that new situation, in which he had to be on the defensive, he who was accustomed only to bold strokes.

"When I think," murmured the advocate, "that I took two years to fill those walls, and that I have still this whole panel to fill——"

Indeed, in the most obvious spot of the high wall, an empty space was apparent, or rather an evacuated space, for a big gilded nail near the ceiling showed the visible, almost coarse, trace of the trap laid for the poor simple Nabob, who foolishly let himself be caught in it.

"My dear Monsieur Le Merquier," he said, in a caressing, good-humoured voice, "I have a Virgin by Tintoretto that would exactly suit your panel."

It was impossible to read anything in the barrister's eyes that had now fled behind their spectacled shelter,

"Allow me to hang it there, opposite your table. It may sometimes remind you of me."

"And lessen the severity of my report, eh, Monsieur?" exclaimed Le Merquier, standing up with terrifying aspect, his hand on the bell. "I have seen a good deal of impudence in my life, but never anything equal to this. Such offers to me, in my own house!"

"But, my dear colleague, I swear to you——"

"Show him out," said the barrister to the servant who had just entered; and from inside his cabinet, whose door remained open, before the whole anteroom full of people, whose paternosters became hushed, he pursued Jansoulet—who turned his back and hastened, stammering, to the door—with these withering words:

"You have just outraged the honour of the whole Chamber in my person, Monsieur. Our colleagues shall be informed of it this very day; and, by adding this fresh cause of complaint to the rest, you will learn to your cost that Paris is not the East, and that the shameful buying and selling of the human conscience is not carried on here as it is there."

Then, after having driven the money-changer from the temple, the just man closed his door, and, approaching the mysterious green curtain, said in a tone of voice that sounded rather soft after his feigned anger:

"Did I do it well, Baroness Marie?"

CHAPTER XVIII

The Sitting of the Chamber

That morning, by way of exception, there had not been a grand lunch at number 12, Place Vendôme. So you might have seen, at about one o'clock, the majestic expanse of M. Barreau, blossoming at the door of the house, surrounded by four or five servants, and the same number of grooms in Scotch caps. There was a cab before the door, and the cabman was taking down an old-fashioned leather box, whilst a tall old woman, who held herself straight in a little green shawl, jumped lightly on the pavement, a basket on her arm, looked at the number of the house very carefully, then came up to the servants and asked if M. Bernard Jansoulet lived there.

"He lives here," some one answered. "But he is out."

"That does not matter," said the old woman, quite simply.

She went back to the cabman, had her box put down, and paid her fare, afterwards burying her purse in her pocket with a gesture that expressed her provincial distrust of Paris.

Since Jansoulet had been elected deputy for Corsica, so many exotic and strange people had been stopping

at his house, that the servants were not particularly astonished at the dark-complexioned woman, with the black, glistening eyes, who in her severe head-dress much resembled a genuine Corsican, just arrived from the "bush," but distinguished from the regular islanders by the ease and calmness of her manners.

"So the master is not in?" she queried in a tone better suited to the employees of a farm, of a *mas* in her province, than to the insolent valets of a big Parisian house.

"No, the master is not in."

"And the children?"

"They are taking their lesson. You cannot see them."

"And Madame?"

"She is sleeping. Nobody is allowed in her room before three o'clock."

It seemed to astonish the worthy woman a little that anyone could remain in bed so long; but the sure instinct that guides exceptional natures, in default of education, prevented her from saying anything before the servants, and she at once asked to see Paul de Géry.

"He is travelling."

"Well, then, Jean Baptiste Bompain?"

"He is at the sitting of the Chamber with Monsieur."

She knitted her thick, grey eyebrows:

"It does not matter—take up my luggage all the same."

And, with a little malicious glance of her eye, a proud air, which was her revenge for the insolent looks directed at her, she added:

"I am the master's mother."

The servants and grooms respectfully made way for her. M. Barreau raised his cap.

"I thought I had seen Madame before, somewhere."

"I thought so, my man," replied mother Jansoulet, who had just felt sick at heart at the memory of the unfortunate fêtes for the Bey.

My man!—to M. Barreau, a man of such importance. She at once rose very high in the esteem of the servants.

Grandeur and splendour did not much dazzle the brave old woman. Indeed, as she was going up the grand staircase behind her trunk, the baskets of flowers on the landings, the lamps supported by bronze statues, did not prevent her from noticing that there was an inch of dust on the baluster and holes in the carpet. She was taken to the second-floor rooms, reserved for the Levantine and the children, and there, in a room used as a laundry, she waited all alone, her basket on her knees, for the return of her Bernard. Presently, remarking the disorder amongst the linen, she got up from her chair and began to pick it up and sort it, smooth and fold it with great care, as she used to do on the lawns of Saint-Romans, when she had a great washing-day. She was soon absorbed in her occupation, which had made her forget her journey, Paris, even the place in which she was, when a stout man, thick-set, bearded, in patent-leather boots, with a velvet jacket that showed off a neck like a bull, entered the laundry.

"Hallo! Cabassu."

"You here, Madame Françoise! This is a surprise," said the shampooer, opening his eyes wide.

"Yes, my good Cabassu, here I am. I have just

come. And, as you see, I am already at work. It made my soul bleed to see all this mess."

"So you have come for the sitting?"

"What sitting?"

"Why, the great sitting of the Legislative Body to-day."

"No, I did not. What has it to do with me? I don't understand such things. No; I came because I wanted to know my little Jansoulets, and besides, I was getting uneasy. I was afraid one of the children was ill, that Bernard's affairs were going badly, all sorts of unpleasant ideas I felt dreadfully distressed, and so I came up. They are all well here, as far as I can make out?"

"Yes, Madame Françoise. Thanks to God, they are all in splendid health."

"And Bernard? His business? It is all right?"

"Oh! you know, we always have our little worries in this life. I don't fancy there is anything to be complained of. But you must be hungry. I shall have something sent you."

He was going to ring the bell, making himself much more at home than the old mother. She stopped him:

"No, no, I don't want anything. I have still some provisions left over"

She laid on the edge of the table two figs, a crust of bread, which she took from her basket, and said, as she ate:

"And what are you doing, my little man? You look a bit better off than when you last came to the Bourg. What linen! what clothes! What is your line?"

"I am a professor of shampooing," replied Aristide, gravely.

"You a professor?" she queried with respectful astonishment; but she did not dare to ask what he taught, and Cabassu, rather embarrassed by questions, hastened to pass on to another subject:

"Shall I go for the children? They don't know, I suppose, that their grandmother is here?"

"I did not want to disturb them in their work. But I think the class is over now. Listen."

At last the door opened. First came the tutor, an abbé with a pointed nose and prominent cheek-bones, whom we formerly saw at Jansoulet's big lunch. With the solemn, arrogant air of a man crushed with responsibilities, which must have been that of the great prelates charged with the education of the Dauphins of France, he advanced in front of three little curly, gloved boys, with oblong hats, short jackets, leather bags and big red stockings reaching half up their little legs, which were thin as those of growing children—in fact, a perfect costume for cycling.

"My boys," said Cabassu, the familiar of the house, "this is Madame Jansoulet, your grandmother, who came to Paris expressly to see you."

They stopped in astonishment, examining that old face crevassed between the yellow strings of her cap, her strange dress, of a simplicity they did not know; and their grandmother's astonishment was equal to theirs, enhanced in her case by a heartrending disappointment, and embarrassment at the sight of those stiff little gentlemen, as supercilious as the marquises, the counts and prefects her son used to bring to Saint-Romans. On their tutor bidding them "to salute their venerable grandmother," they came up in turn and shook hands shrinkingly with her,

just as they had often done in the attics of poor people they had visited. The abbé understood the embarrassing position, and, in order to break the ice, broke forth into an allocution, delivered in that high voice, with those virulent gestures, common to those who always imagine that they are standing in a pulpit:

"Well, Madame! And now the day has come, the great day on which M. Jansoulet will confound his foes. *Confundantur hostes mei, quia injuste iniquitatem fecerunt in me*, because they have unjustly persecuted me."

The old woman bent religiously before the priest's Latin; but her face assumed a vague expression of restlessness at the notion of enemies and persecutions.

"Those enemies are powerful and numerous, my lady, but don't let us alarm ourselves unnecessarily. Let us trust in the decrees of Heaven and the justice of our cause. God is with us, and we shall not be overthrown. *In medio ejus non commovebitur.*"

A gigantic negro, all festooned with new gilt, interrupted him by announcing that the velocipedes were ready for the daily lesson on the terrace of the Tuileries. Before going, the children solemnly shook once more the wrinkled, hardened hand of their grandmother, who watched them depart with a feeling of stupefaction and a tightening at her heart.

When she was alone with Cabassu, she asked him for some explanation of the priest's words. Had her son a great many enemies?

"Oh!" said Cabassu, "it's not astonishing, in his position."

"But what is this great day, this meeting of which you are all talking?"

"Well! To-day it will be decided whether Bernard is a deputy or not."

"What? Is he not a deputy yet? And I have been saying so all over the place and illuminated Saint-Romans a month ago in honour of the event. Then I have been made to tell a lie!"

The shampooer had much difficulty in explaining to her the Parliamentary formalities for the confirmation of elections. She only listened with one ear, feverishly walking up and down the laundry.

"That's where my Bernard is at this moment?"

"Yes, Madame."

"And can women go into the Chamber? Then why is not his wife there? Because I now fully understand it is an important matter for him. He would want on a day like this to have all that he loves at his side. Come, my boy, you must take me to the Chamber, you know. Is it far?"

"No, quite near here; only it must have begun already. And besides," added Cabassu, rather confused, "it is the time when Madame expects me."

"Oh! Are you teaching her that thing of which you are a professor? What did you call it?"

"Shampooing. It's an ancient art. There's her bell. She is going to send for me. Do you wish me to tell her you are here?"

"No, no; I want to go to the sitting at once."

"But you have no entrance card."

"Bah! I shall say I am Jansoulet's mother, and have come to hear my son judged."

Poor mother! She did not know how near she was to the truth.

"If you wait a moment, Madame Françoise, I shall get somebody to go with you."

"Oh! you know, servants and I don't get on together. I have a tongue. There are people in the streets; I can easily find my way."

He made a last effort, without revealing all his thought:

"Take care. His enemies are going to speak against him in the Chamber. You will hear things that will distress you."

Oh! the beautiful smile of maternal faith and pride with which she answered:

"Don't I know better than any of them my son's worth! Could anything alter my opinion? If so, I should be a perfect ingrate. Good-bye!"

And giving her cap a terrible shake, she went off.

Holding her bust straight, her head erect, the old woman went off with quick strides, under the great arcades she had been told to follow, rather disturbed by the incessant rolling of carriages, and the want of the faithful distaff which she had been used to carry during her walks for fifty years. She was also agitated, frightened, by the ideas of enmities and persecutions, the priest's mysterious words, Cabassu's reservations. She found in them the explanations of the forebodings that had laid so strong a hold of her as to draw her away from her habits, her duties, the superintendence of the château and her invalid.

A magnificent square, immense, dazzling, two streams of water falling in silvery dust, then a great stone bridge, and, right at the end, a square house with statues in front, a gate near which were carriages,

people entering, policemen. That was the Chamber. She boldly made her way through the crowd, and walked up to a high glass door.

"Your card, my good woman?"

The good woman had no card, but she simply said to one of the red-lapelled ushers who guarded the entrance:

"I am Bernard Jansoulet's mother. I have come to attend my boy's sitting"

It was her boy's sitting in very deed; for his name, to the accompaniment of laughter and anecdotes, was being whispered among the crowd besieging the doors, in the passages, the hall, the tribune, the whole palace. They were expecting a great scandal, terrible revelations of the reporter, which would no doubt make the barbarian perpetrate some act of violence; and people crowded in as if for a first night at a theatre, or the pleadings in a cause célèbre. The old mother would certainly have been lost in the crowd, if the trace of gold, left by the Nabob wherever he went, had not opened all paths to her. So, following one of the ushers, she at last arrived at a landing, where various inscriptions, "Tribune of the Senate, of the Diplomatic Corps, of the Deputies," surmounted small doors like those of a furnished hotel or theatre boxes. She went in, and at first saw nothing but four or five crowded benches, then, opposite her, a long way off, separated by a vast, empty space, other galleries equally full. She stood and leant against the partition, astonished at being there, dazzled, deafened. A whiff of warm air that blew into her face, a noise of rising voices in the slope of the estrade, attracted her towards a species of gulf, wide open in the middle of the big vessel, and

in which her son was sure to be. Oh! how she wanted to see him. So, making herself still thinner, using her hard, pointed elbows, she glided down between the wall and the benches, without noticing the trifling angry outbursts she provoked, or the scorn of the fashionably dressed ladies whose lace and spring dresses she was crumpling. For the assembly was elegant, fashionable. Stooping down a bit, she could now see the whole Chamber.

And one thing struck her, that everybody was looking in one direction, towards the same point of attraction; and, as she followed the current of curiosity, she saw that it was her son at whom everybody, both in the hall and in the tribunes, was gazing. In that part of the country where the Jansoulets came from, you may observe in some old churches, behind the choir, a stone cage, where the leper was allowed to listen to the service showing his dark outlines to the curious, timid crowd, like a wild beast crouching against the loopholes in the wall. Françoise remembered very well having seen, in the village in which she had been brought up, the leper, the terror of her childhood, listening to the Mass from his stone cage, lost in the shadow and in reprobation. When she saw her son sitting alone, his head in his hands, on a high bench, apart from the other deputies, the memory came back to her. "You would fancy he was a leper," murmured the peasant. And he was indeed a leper, that poor Nabob, upon whom his millions made in the East were now inflicting, as it were, a terrible and mysterious exotic disease. The bench on which he happened to take his seat was empty, owing to several vacancies caused by leaves of absence and

recent deaths; and whilst the other deputies talked together, laughed, made signs, he kept silent, solitary, marked out for the attention of the whole Chamber, an attention which his mother guessed was malevolent, ironical. How could she let him know she was there, near him, that a faithful heart was beating for him not far off?

Suddenly, a bell was rung in the President's estrade, a quiver ran through the assembly, all heads bent forward to listen, when a thin, spectacled man stood up amid all the sitting people, which lent him at once a certain authority, and said, opening the document he held in his hands:

"Gentlemen, I come, in the name of your Third Committee, to propose the annulling of the election of the second circumscription of the Department of Corsica"

In the deep silence that followed this phrase, which Mother Jansoulet did not understand, a huge fat man in front of her began to breathe hard; and suddenly, in the first row of the tribune, a delightful woman's face turned to him, to make a quick sign of understanding and satisfaction. Her pale forehead, thin lips, eyebrows too dark for the white hat, produced on the good old lady, without her knowing why, the painful impression of the first flash of lightning when a storm begins, and when the fear of the thunderbolt follows the swift combination of the gases.

Le Merquier was reading his report. The slow, monotonous voice, the Lyonnese accent, drawling and soft, the tall figure of the barrister rocking to and fro, with an almost animal movement of the head and shoulders, formed a singular contrast to the savage lucidity of the document. First of all, a brief

account of various electoral irregularities. Never had universal suffrage been treated with such primitive and barbarous *sans-façon*. Then there was no respect for the law. Fraud, intrigue, even violence were rife everywhere. He gave instance after instance. But a still more powerful, though less respectable, influence had been used for the good cause, the influence of bandits. "Yes, bandits, gentlemen; I am not laughing."

The Chamber, which was very attentive, listened with a certain uneasiness. After all, it was an official candidate whose actions were thus denounced, and those strange electoral manners belonged to a privileged country, the cradle of the Imperial family, and so closely allied to the destinies of the dynasty that an attack on Corsica seemed to affect the sovereign. When, however, they saw, on the Government benches, the new Minister of State, Mora's successor and enemy, quite pleased at the check administered to one of the creatures of the deceased, smiling complacently at Le Merquier's cruel bantering, all embarrassment at once vanished, and the Ministerial smile, repeated on three hundred mouths, soon expanded into a hardly-restrained laugh, the laugh of crowds controlled by some master's ferule, who at once explode at the slightest approval of the master.

Impassive and cold in the midst of his success, Le Merquier went on reading in his melancholy voice, penetrating as a Lyonnese shower:

"Now, gentlemen, we may ask ourselves how a stranger, a Provençal returned from the East, ignorant of the interests and needs of that island, in which he had never been seen before the elections, the true

type of what the Corsican disdainfully calls a 'Continental,' how such a man has been able to excite so great enthusiasm, a devotion carried even to crime, to profanation." Then followed an endless series of signed denunciations.

Indignation began to stir that incorruptible Chamber. It grumbled, it grew agitated, on its soft, red velvet benches, it uttered exclamations. There were "oh's" of stupefaction, eyes like circumflex accents, movements of consternation and discouragement, such as are sometimes caused by a spectacle of human degradation The most rascally were those who shouted louder than the others, and turned furiously towards the high, solitary bench, on which the poor leper sat listening, motionless, his head in his hands. Yet, in the midst of the general uproar, one voice was raised in his favour, an inexperienced, dull-sounding voice, a sympathetic stuttering of words, among which you could hear: "Great services rendered to the Corsican population —Considerable works - Caisse Territoriale."

The stutterer was a quite small man, in white gaiters, with the head of an albino, and scanty hair bristling in tufts. The interruption of this maladroit friend only furnished Le Merquier with a quick and natural transition. "The Caisse Territoriale has been mentioned: we are in a position to reply." Paganetti's den seemed indeed to be familiar to him. In a few clear and lively phrases, he threw light even into the depths of that dark lair, revealed all its traps, abysses, windings, like a guide waving his torch over the sinister *in pace* of a dungeon. He spoke of the sham quarries, the railways still in the stage of mere plans, of the chimerical steamers that had vanished in their

own smoke. In fact, after having long extracted the shareholders' money, the Caisse had just served to facilitate the votes of the electors. "For the rest, gentlemen, here is a last detail, with which I might have begun and spared you the awful recital of this electoral pasquinade. I understand that a judicial inquiry has been started this very day into the affairs of the Caisse, and that a serious examination of its books will probably lay bare one of those financial scandals—too frequent, alas! in our days—in which you would not wish, for the sake of your honour, that any of your members should be mixed up."

After this sudden revelation, the reporter stopped a moment, took a pause, like an actor underlining an effect; and, in the dramatic silence that suddenly came upon the Assembly, the noise was heard of a door being shut. It was the Governor, Paganetti, who was hurrying out of the tribune, his face livid, eyes wide open. Monpavon, who was also in the tribune, did not move, expanded his shirt-front. The fat man breathed hard into the flowers of his wife's little white hat

Mother Jansoulet was looking at her son.

"I have mentioned the honour of the Chamber, gentlemen, I wish to add a few words."

Le Merquier was anxious to have nothing to do with scandalous reports, the mystery surrounding that colossal wealth, acquired in distant lands, far from all control. But there were certain points in the candidate's life difficult to clear up, certain details—— He hesitated, seemed to be choosing his words; then finding it impossible to formulate a direct accusation:

"Don't let us lower the debate, gentlemen—you understand, you know to what infamous rumours I

am alluding; to what calumnies, I should prefer to be able to say, but the truth forces me to declare that when M Jansoulet, on being summoned to your Third Committee Room, was put in a position to confound the accusations against him, his explanations were so vague, that, whilst remaining convinced of his innocence, a scrupulous care for your honour caused us to reject a candidature soiled by a suspicion of that nature. No; this man must not sit among you. Besides, what could he do? Having lived so long in the East, he has unlearnt the law, the ways, the customs of his country. He believes in hasty acts of justice, in bastinadoes inflicted in the open street, he relies on the abuse of power, and what is worse, on venality, on the cringing meanness of everyone. He is a merchant who thinks everyone has his price, even the electors and their votes, even his colleagues and their conscience."

You ought to have seen with what naive admiration those good, fat deputies, somnolent in their well-being, listened to this ascetic. How well they understood that fine surname of "My Conscience" which the Courts of Justice had decreed him, where he imposed upon men by his tall stature and inflexible gestures. In the tribunes, the enthusiasm grew yet greater. Pretty heads were inclined to see him, to drink in his words. Words of approval were uttered, bending the bonnets of all shades, like the wind when it passes over a flourishing wheatfield. A woman's voice cried with a slight foreign accent: "Bravo—bravo!"

And the mother?

Standing up, motionless, attentive in her desire to understand something of the legal phraseology, of the mysterious allusions, when she looked at her son and

Le Merquier, she perceived what injury was being done by the one to the other, what treacherous, poisoned intentions fell from that long speech on the unfortunate man, whom you would have thought asleep, had it not been for the trembling of his broad shoulders, and the clenching of his hands in his hair, which they furiously tore, whilst concealing his face. Presently he arose, shook his curly hair, whilst his lips quivered with nervous tears. But, instead of leaving his seat, he clung on to it, his big hands kneading the wood of the desk in front The other had ended, it was now his turn to reply:

"Gentlemen," said he.

He stopped at once, frightened by the rough, terribly coarse and vulgar sound of his own voice, which he now heard for the first time in public. During the pause, which was made additionally painful by the movements of his face, by tones he sought for but could not produce, he had to recover strength for his defence. And if the poor man's anguish was heartrending, the old mother, sitting up there, leaning over, panting, moving her lips nervously as if to help him to find the words, was a copy of his torture. Although he could not see her, in the position in which he was in regard to that tribune, which he intentionally avoided looking at, that maternal breath, the burning magnetism of those black eyes at last restored life to him, and suddenly his words and gestures became free:

"Above all, gentlemen, I declare to you that I have not come to defend my election. If you think that electoral methods have not always been the same in Corsica, that all the irregularities committed should be set down to the corrupting influence of my gold

and not to the uneducated and passionate temperament of the people, reject me; it will be just and I shall not murmur. But there is in all this another matter besides my election, accusations that are levelled at my honour, question it, and it is to that alone I wish to reply." His voice grew gradually assured, though still broken and husky, but with sympathetic notes. Very rapidly he sketched his life, his beginnings, his departure for the East.

It was like one of those old stories of the eighteenth century, in which we are told of Barbary Corsairs sweeping the Latin seas, of Beys and bold Provençals, as brown as crickets, who always end by marrying some sultana and "taking the turban," according to the old Marseillese phrase. "As for me," said the Nabob with his good-humoured smile, "I had no need to take the turban in order to get rich. I contented myself with importing into those indolent countries the activity, the suppleness of a southern Frenchman, and managed in a few years to make one of those huge fortunes that are only made in those deucedly hot countries, where everything is gigantic, precocious, disproportioned, where flowers grew in one night, where one tree produces a forest. The only way of obtaining forgiveness for such fortunes is the manner in which they are used, and I claim that no favourite of fortune ever tried harder than myself to get his riches pardoned. I have not succeeded." Ah! no, he had not succeeded. He had only met with contempt or hate for squandering his gold so widely. Hatred! Who could boast of having excited so much as he? He was too rich, that was set down to him in the place of all vices, all crimes, destined him for anonymous revenges, to cruel and incessant enmities.

"Ah! gentlemen," cried the poor Nabob, raising his clenched fists, "I have known poverty, I have fought with it body to body, and it was a fearful struggle, I swear to you. But to struggle against riches, to defend one's happiness, one's honour, one's repose, ill-sheltered behind piles of gold that crumble underneath and crush you, that is something still more hideous, more heart-breaking. Never in the darkest days of my distress have I endured the pain, the anguish, the sleeplessness, with which my fortune has overwhelmed me, that horrible fortune which I hate and is stifling me. I am called the Nabob in Paris. I ought not to be called the Nabob, but the Pariah, a social Pariah stretching his arms wide-open to a society that does not want him."

In writing, the words may seem cold, but there, in the presence of the Assembly, the man's defence appeared impressed with an eloquent and grand sincerity, which at first caused astonishment, coming from that rustic, that parvenu, unread, uneducated, with the voice of a Rhône boatman and the manners of a porter, and who singularly stirred his audience by his uncultivated, savage ways, unlike any Parliamentary ideal they knew of. Signs of approval had already been heard on those benches, accustomed to monotonous and colourless administrative language. But, at that cry of rage and despair uttered against riches by the poor man whom they were entangling, drowning in golden billows, and who was fighting for life, calling out for help from the bottom of his Pactolus, the whole chamber started up with warm applause, hands held out, as if to give the unfortunate Nabob proofs of the esteem for which he showed himself so eager, and at the same time to save him from ship-

wreck. Jansoulet felt it, and, encouraged by their sympathy, he went on, head erect, with emboldened looks.

"You have been informed, gentlemen, that I am not worthy to sit among you. And he who said so was the last man from whom I should have expected it, for he alone knows the painful secret of my life; he alone could speak for me, justify me, and convince you. He did not want to do so. Well! I shall try to do so, whatever it may cost me. Outrageously slandered before the whole country, I owe to myself, to my children, this public justification, and I have made up my mind to clear myself."

Moving brusquely, he then turned towards the tribune in which he knew his enemy was watching him, and suddenly stopped, overcome with terror. There, just opposite him, behind the Baroness' small, rancorous, pale head, his mother, his own mother, whom he believed to be two hundred leagues away from the dread storm, was looking at him, leaning against the wall, turning to him her divine face, wet with tears, but proud and radiant all the same at her Bernard's great success For it was a real success of sincere human emotion, which a few words more might change into a triumph. "Speak—speak," was shouted from all parts of the chamber, to reassure, to encourage him. But Jansoulet did not speak. Yet he had very little more to say in his defence: "The slanderers deliberately confused two names. My name is Bernard Jansoulet. The other was called Louis Jansoulet." Not a word more.

But it was too much to say in the presence of his mother, who was still ignorant of her eldest son's dishonour. It was too much for his respect for his mother and his family.

He thought he heard the voice of his old father: "I am dying of shame, my child." Would not she also die of shame, if he spoke? He replied to his mother's smile with a sublime look of self-sacrifice, then in a hollow voice, with a gesture of discouragement:

"Excuse me, gentlemen, the explanation is beyond my strength. Order an inquiry into my life; it is open to all, and has had plenty of light thrown on it, alas! since everyone may interpret any of my acts as they please. I swear to you, you will find nothing in it to prevent me from sitting among the representatives of my country."

The amazement, the disillusion were immense, in the presence of this break-down, which seemed to all like the sudden cowardice of a great effrontery brought to bay. There was a moment's stir on the benches, the hubbub of a vote by rising, which the Nabob looked at vaguely in the dim light coming in through the windows, as a condemned man looks at the surging crowd from the top of the scaffold; then, after that long wait which seems a century when it precedes a critical minute, the President declared amid deep silence, and in the most natural way.

"The election of M. Bernard Jansoulet is annulled."

Never was a man's life cut short with less solemnity or fuss.

Up there, in the tribune, Mother Jansoulet understood nothing, except that seats were becoming vacant, and people were getting up and going. Soon there only remained with her the fat man and the lady in the white hat, who were leaning right over the edge of the railing, looking inquisitively in Bernard's direction. Bernard seemed to be getting ready to

depart himself, for he was very quietly arranging thick bundles of paper in a big portfolio. He then rose up, and left his seat. Ah! there are sometimes very cruel moments in the lives of public men. Gravely, walking heavily with the eyes of the whole Assembly on him, he had to redescend those steps up which he had climbed with so much trouble and money; and inexorable fate was hurrying him to the bottom.

That was what the Hemerlingues were waiting for, following to the end with their eyes that appalling, humiliating exit, which gives a rejected deputy some of the shame and fright of dismissal; then, as soon as the Nabob had vanished, they looked at each other with a silent laugh and left the tribune, without the old woman daring to ask them for information, warned by her instinct of their hostility. She was now alone, and listened carefully to something being read, thinking it still concerned her son. However, the usher, who introduced her, came and told her it was all over, that she had better go. She seemed very surprised.

"Really? It's all over?" she asked, rising regretfully.

And, timidly, in a low voice:

"Has he—has he won?"

It was so naive, so touching, that the usher did not even want to laugh.

"Unfortunately, no, Madame, M. Jansoulet has not won. But why did he stop when he was going on so splendidly? If it's true he had never been in Paris before, and that another Jansoulet did everything of which he is accused, why did he not say so?"

The old mother, who had become very pale, leant against the railing of the staircase.

She had understood.

Bernard's sudden stopping, on seeing her, the sacrifice he had offered her so simply with that beautiful look of a dying animal, recurred to her; at the same time, the shame of the eldest son, of the beloved child, made the mother's pain doubly cruel, she felt heart-broken whichever way she turned. Yes, yes, it was because of her that he refused to speak. But she would not accept such a sacrifice. He must return at once to explain himself before the deputies.

"My son? Where is my son?"

"Down below, Madame, in his carriage. He has sent me to fetch you."

She rushed before the usher, walking rapidly, speaking aloud, hustling on her way small black, bearded men, who were gesticulating in the passages. After the Salle des Pas-Perdus, she crossed a large, circular anteroom, where the respectful rows of lackeys made a kind of living, brilliant basement to the high, bare wall. From there you could see, through the glass doors, the outside gate, the assembled crowd, and, among other carriages, the Nabob's coach awaiting her. The peasant, as she passed, recognised in a group her enormous neighbour in the tribune with the livid, spectacled man who had thundered against her son, and was receiving all sorts of congratulations and handshakes on account of his speech. At the name of Jansoulet, uttered amid mocking and gratified jeers, she slowed down her big strides.

"After all," a good-looking fellow was saying, who had the face of a wicked woman, "he never showed in what points our accusations were false."

The old woman, on hearing this, made a terrible

hole in the crowd, and, planting herself before Moessard:

"What he did not tell you, I shall tell you. I am his mother, and it is my duty to speak."

She stopped to seize Le Merquier, who was moving away, by the sleeve:

"You, first of all, you bad man, you are going to listen to me. What have you against my son? You don't know who he is? Wait a bit and I'll tell you."

And, turning to the journalist.

"I had two sons, Monsieur."

Moessard was no longer there. She turned again to Le Merquier.

"Two sons, Monsieur."

Le Merquier had disappeared.

"Oh! listen to me, some one, please," cried the poor mother, throwing her arms around and her words in order to gather, to keep an audience; but they all fled, melted away, dispersed, deputies, reporters, unknown and mocking faces to whom she wanted to tell her tale at any cost, without minding the gulfs of indifference into which fell her pains and her joys, her motherly tenderness and pride, expressed in a brogue full of genius. And while she was bestirring herself, struggling, bewildered, her coif in disorder, grotesque at once and sublime, as are all children of nature in the midst of a drama of civilisation, calling as witnesses to the honesty of her son and the injustice of men even the liveried servants, whose contemptuous impassiveness was more cruel than all, Jansoulet, who had come to meet her, uneasy at not seeing her, suddenly appeared by her side.

"Take my arm, my mother. We must not stay here."

He said this very loud, in so calm and firm a tone that all the laughter stopped, and the old woman, suddenly satisfied, supported by that powerful arm, which still trembled with the remnants of his rage, left the palace between two respectful rows of servants. Splendid, rustic pair, the millions of the son illuminating the peasanthood of the mother, like a golden shrine framing the rags of a saint, they vanished in the lovely sun outside, in the splendour of their glittering coach, a cruel irony in the presence of their great distress, a striking symbol of the fearful misery of the rich.

Both sitting on the back seat, for they were afraid to be seen, they did not speak at first. But as soon as the carriage had started, had left behind it that sad Calvary where his honour remained gibbeted, Jansoulet, at the end of his tether, laid his head on his mother's shoulder, hid it in her old green shawl, and there, shedding burning tears, all his big body shaken by sobs, he uttered again the cry of his childhood, his patois wail of the days when he was quite small: "Mama—Mama."

CHAPTER XIX

PARISIAN DRAMAS

"How brief the hour
Of love doth seem!
'Tis less than a moment,
Scarce more than a dream"

IN the half-light of the great drawing-room in its summer array, full of flowers, the furniture in its holland covers, the lustres veiled, the blinds lowered, the windows opened, Madame Jenkins, sitting at the piano, is trying to read the new melody of the musician of the hour, a few sonorous phrases accompanying exquisite verses, a melancholy Lied, in unequal stanzas, that seems written for her tender, grave voice, and the restless state of her soul

"For time tears away
The enchantment of love,"

sighs the poor woman, moved at the sound of the sad lines; and whilst the notes fly away into the court, quiet as usual, where the fountain pours its water amid a mass of rhododendrons, the singer stops, her hands on the chord, her eyes fixed on the music, but her thoughts far away.

The doctor is absent. The care of his business, of his health, has exiled him from Paris for a few days,

and, as happens in solitude, the thoughts of beautiful Madame Jenkins have taken that serious turn, that analytical tendency, which sometimes makes momentary separations fatal to the most united households. It was long since they had been united. They only met at meal times, before the servants, hardly spoke, unless he, the man of unctuous manners, let himself go with some brutal remark about her son, about her growing years, or about a dress he did not like. Always serene and gentle, she stifled her tears, accepted everything, pretended not to understand; not that she still loved him, after so much cruelty and scorn heaped upon her; but it was the story, just as their coachman Joe used to tell it, "of an old hag who insisted upon being married." Up till then a terrible obstacle, the life of the legitimate wife, had prolonged a dishonouring situation. Now that the obstacle no longer existed, she wanted to end the comedy, because of André, who might any day be forced to despise his mother, because of the people they had been taking in for ten years past, and whom she never visited without heart-beatings, fearing the reception she would meet with, the day after a discovery. Jenkins had answered her allusions, her entreaties, first of all by phrases, by expostulations: "Do you doubt me? Is not our engagement sacred?"

He also alleged the difficulty of keeping secret an act of such importance. Then he kept a rancorous silence, pregnant with cold anger and violent resolutions. The death of the Duke, the check given to a mad vanity, had dealt the last blow; for calamity, which often unites hearts ready to come to an understanding, finishes and completes disunion.

And it was a real disaster. The vogue of Jenkins' Pearls being suddenly gone, the position of the foreign quack having been clearly defined by old Bouchereau in the "Journal de l'Académie," Society people looked at one another in terror, with pallor due more to fright than the absorption of arsenic. Already the Irishman had felt the effect of the change of the fashionable breeze.

It was no doubt for that reason that Jenkins had thought fit to disappear for some time, leaving Madame to go on frequenting the salons which were still open to them, in order to feel the pulse of public feeling. It was a difficult job for the poor woman, who found, a little everywhere, a rather cold, distant welcome. But she did not complain, hoping in this way to attain to marriage, to place between her and him, as a last resort, the painful bond of pity, of common trials. And as her social talent lay in her musical skill, she was practising.

A flood of raw light suddenly came into the salon with the lady's maid, who brought her mistress a card: "Heurteux, agent."

The gentleman was there. He insisted on seeing Madame.

"You told him the doctor is away?"

He had been told; but he wanted to see Madame.

"Me?"

Uneasy, she looked at the coarse card, the unknown, harsh name: "Heurteux." What could it be?

"All right, show him in."

Heurteux, the agent, on coming from broad daylight into the half light of the salon, blinked, with an uncertain air tried to see. She, on the other hand,

clearly distinguished a hard wooden face, with iron-grey whiskers and prominent jaws, one of those marauders of the Law one meets about the Palais de Justice, who seem to have been born fifty, with a bitter mouth, an envious expression, a morocco portfolio under his arm. He sat on the edge of the seat she pointed out, turned his head to be sure the servant had left, then methodically opened his portfolio as if to look for a paper. Seeing that he did not speak, she began in an impatient tone:

"I must inform you, Monsieur, that my husband is away, and that I am not acquainted with his business affairs."

Without moving, his hand in his documents, the man replied:

"I know perfectly well that M. Jenkins is away, Madame"—he laid stress on the words "M. Jenkins"—"because I come from him."

She looked at him in terror:

"From him?"

"Alas! yes, Madame. The doctor's position—you know it, no doubt—is very critical at the moment. Unlucky speculations on the Bourse, the crash of a great financial undertaking in which he had invested money, the Bethlehem Refuge, so heavy a burden for one man alone, all these combined have obliged him to take a heroic resolution. He is selling his mansion, his horses, all he possesses, and has given me his power of attorney."

He had found at last what he was seeking for, one of those stamped papers, crammed with references and additional lines, in which the impassive Law sometimes endorses so many cowardices and lies. Madame Jenkins was about to say: "But I am here,

myself. I would have carried out all his wishes, all his orders,"—when she all at once understood by her visitor's sans-gêne, his almost insolent assurance, that she was one of the superfluities to be got rid of, together with the costly mansion and useless luxuries, and that her departure would be the signal for the sale.

She rose abruptly. The man, still sitting, went on:

"What remains to be said, Madame,"—oh! she knew, she could have dictated what remained to be said—"is so painful, so delicate. M. Jenkins is leaving Paris for a long time, and fearing to expose you to the chances, the dangers of the new life he is going to lead, to estrange you from a son you cherish, and in whose interests it is perhaps better——"

She no longer heard him, saw him, and, whilst he was spinning out his thread-like phrases, a prey to despair, perhaps to madness, she heard singing in herself the haunting air that pursued her amid this fearful ruin of life, just as the last image seen remains in the eyes of a drowning man:

> "Time tears away
> The enchantment of love."

Of a sudden, her feeling of pride returned.

"Enough, Monsieur. All your windings and phrases are only an added insult. The truth is that I am being driven out of the house into the streets, like a servant."

"Oh! Madame, madame. The situation is hard enough without envenoming it more by words. In the evolution of his modus vivendi, M. Jenkins separates from you, but he does it with death in his soul, and the proposals I am enjoined to make you are a proof

of his feelings for you. To begin with, in the matter of furniture and toilet objects, I am authorised to let you take——"

"Enough," she said.

She rushed to the bell

"I am going out. Quick! my hat, my mantle, anything! I am in a hurry."

And, whilst the servant was gone to look for what she wanted:

"Everything here belongs to M. Jenkins. He is free to dispose of them. I don't want anything from him—don't insist—it's useless."

The man did not insist. His mission being accomplished, the rest mattered little to him.

Deliberately, coldly, she put on her hat carefully before the mirror, the servant attaching the veil, adjusting the folds of the mantle to her shoulders; then she looked all round, thought a moment if she had not forgotten anything precious. No, nothing; her son's letters were in her pocket; she never left them about.

"Shall I order the carriage?"

"No"

And she went out.

It was about five o'clock. At that moment, Bernard Jansoulet was passing the gate of the Legislative Body, his mother on his arm; but poignant as was that drama, this one surpassed it, with its greater unforeseenness, its entire lack of solemnity The weather was splendid. Madame Jenkins took the direction of the Boulevards, walking hurriedly along, with a stunned feeling of pain. What a horrible fall! Rich five minutes ago, surrounded by all the respect and comfort of a fashionable life,

Now nothing,—not even a roof to sleep under, not even a name.

Where should she go? What would become of her?

She had at first thought of her son. But to confess her sin, to blush in the presence of her respectful son, to weep before him, whilst taking away the right of being consoled, it was beyond her strength. No, there was only death left to her. To die as soon as possible, escape shame by a complete disappearance, the fatal ending of inextricable positions. But where die? How? There are so many ways of doing it. And she mentally evoked them all as she walked. All at once, Madame Jenkins, feeling uneasy at the impression of her altered looks, at what people might think, seeing her rushing on so blindly and so anxious, slackened her pace to the lounge of a mere promenade, stopped before shops. Her staring eyes were fixed on the various objects in the windows, without seeing them; but a vague, pale reflection in the clear glass showed her her image, lying motionless on a bed in furnished rooms, with a leaden slumber caused by an opiate, dulling her brain, or outside the walls, displacing the mud about some moored boat. Which was the better course?

She hesitated, compared; then, making up her mind, she rapidly went off with the regretful air of a woman tearing herself away from a shop window. As she started, the Marquis de Monpavon, proud and dandified as ever, with a flower in his buttonhole, bowed to her from a distance in that grand style so dear to women's vanity. She gave him a pretty Parisian bow, expressed in an imperceptible bend of

the figure and a smile in the eyes; and you would never have thought, on seeing that exchange of Society politeness, that the same gloomy thought was animating these two loungers who had met by chance on the road which was leading them to the same goal.

The prediction of Mora's valet had been realised for the Marquis: "We may die, or lose power, and then you would be asked to account, and it would be terrible." It was terrible. The ex-Receiver-General had hardly managed to get a fortnight's delay in order to refund the Treasury, reckoning, as a last chance, that Jansoulet's election would be confirmed, that he would get back his millions, and come again to his assistance. The Assembly's decision had just taken away his last hope. As soon as he knew it, he returned very quietly to the club, went up into his room, where Francis was impatiently waiting to give him an important paper that had come during the day. It was a notification to the Sieur Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon to appear the following day in the cabinet of the Juge d'Instruction.

The old beau, who had long expected and foreseen this extremity, had made up his mind beforehand. A Monpavon before the police-court, a Monpavon in prison! Never! He set all his affairs in order, tore up his papers, carefully emptied his pockets, into which he slipped a few things on his toilet table, all so calmly and naturally, that when, on leaving, he said to Francis: "Going to bath—Devil of a Chamber—Poisonous dust," the servant believed him. Besides, the Marquis was not lying. His long, agitating stand in the dust of the tribune had knocked him over as much as two nights in a train; and his resolution to die being united with his desire to have a nice bath,

the old Sybarite had the idea of dying in a bath, like thingumbob—what's his name?— ps ps ps—and other famous personages of antiquity.

Adorned over his officer's rosette by a white camellia, which the club's pretty flower-girl used to put into his coat, he was going with a light step up the Boulevard des Capucines, when the sight of Madame Jenkins troubled his serenity for a moment. He found in her an air of youth, a flame in her eyes, something so poignant that he stopped to look at her. The thought that his eyes were about to be for ever closed on such a pretty sight, damped the old beau's heart a bit, slackened the speed of his steps. But, a few steps further, another kind of meeting restored him to his full courage.

Somebody, with a disgraced look about him, dazzled by the light, was crossing the Boulevard: it was old Marestang, a former Senator and Minister, so seriously compromised in the Tourteaux de Malte, that, in spite of his age, his services, the great scandal of a similar lawsuit, he had been condemned to two years' imprisonment, his name removed from the registers of the Legion of Honour, in which he was one of the great dignitaries. The affair was already old history, and the poor devil, having had part of his time remitted, had just left prison, lost, desperate, not having even wherewith to gild his moral distress, for he had had to disgorge his plunder. Monpavon, passing near him, caught his timid, uneasy eye, imploring a greeting and yet avoiding it. The idea that he might have one thus to humiliate himself at once revolted him. "Come now! would it be possible?" And, figure erect, his shirt-front expanded, he went on his way, more firm and resolute than ever.

M. de Monpavon is going to his death. He goes by the long line of Boulevards all ablaze in the direction of the Madeleine, and treads once more the elastic asphalt, loitering, his nose in the air, his hands at his back. He has time, there is no hurry, he can go to the rendezvous when he likes. Every moment he smiles, sends a little condescending greeting with the tips of his fingers, or raises his hat in the grand style. Everything fascinates, charms him, the noise of the watering-carts, of the awnings raised before the cafés that descend to the middle of the pavements. He passes the luxurious establishments where he usually takes his bath, nor does he stop at the Bains Chinois. He is too well known there. The whole of Paris would know of his death the same night. There would be a scandal of bad taste in the clubs, the salons; and the old dandy, the man of form, wanted to spare himself that shame, to plunge, to be swallowed up in the obscurity of an anonymous suicide. That is why he has been careful not to have anything on him by which he would be recognised, why he seeks in immense Paris the distant, unknown part, where he will be buried in the terrible but comforting confusion of the public grave.

Already, since Monpavon started, the look of the Boulevard has changed a good deal. The crowd has become more compact, more active and anxious, the houses less big, furrowed with sign-boards. When he has passed the Porte Saint Dennis and Saint-Martin the old beau knows nobody, and may boast of being totally unknown. The wind is freshening, twilight is darkening the distances, and the road becomes darker with every step. It seems to Monpavon as if he is going into the night. He shivers a little, but does not

weaken in purpose, and walks on with head erect and frill bulging out.

Suddenly the Marquis stops; he has found what he wanted. Between the black shop of a charcoal-dealer and that of a packer, there is a gate surmounted with the word "Baths" on a dull lantern. He enters, crosses a small, damp garden, where a mournful spring of water is playing in the rockery. That was the sinister corner he was looking for. Who would ever imagine the Marquis de Monpavon had gone there to cut his throat? A low house, with green shutters, is at the end, a glass door, that spurious villa-look they all have. He asks for a bath, goes along the narrow passage, and whilst the bath is being got ready, with the noise of the water behind him, he smokes his cigar at the window, looks at the garden with its thin lilacs and the high wall that shuts it in. The sound of a bugle in the yard sends back the memory of the Marquis thirty years, his campaigns in Algiers, the high ramparts of Constantinople, Mora's arrival in the regiment, and duels and fine parties. Ah! How well life started! What a pity that those d——d cards—ps—ps—ps— Well, after all, it's a fine thing to have preserved one's form.

"Monsieur," said the waiter, "the bath is ready."

* * * * *

At that moment, panting and pale, Madame Jenkins was entering André's studio, to which an instinct stronger than her will had led her, the need of kissing her son before dying. On opening the door —he had given her a key—she was nevertheless consoled by seeing that he had not returned, that she would have time to calm her feelings. On the table

was the little note he generally left on going out, in order that his mother, whose visits were becoming fewer and shorter through Jenkins' tyranny, might know where he was, wait for him or join him. These two had never ceased to love one another tenderly, deeply, despite the cruelties of life, that forced them to use the secret precautions and mystery of a clandestine love.

"I am at the rehearsal," said the little note; "I shall be back about seven."

This attention from her son, whom she had not been to see for three weeks, and who nevertheless persisted in expecting her, brought a stifling flood of tears to the mother's eyes. It was as if she had just entered a new world. Everything was so light, so calm, so lofty, in this small room, that retained the last gleam of day on its windows! Its bare walls were adorned by one large portrait only, her own, smiling in the place of honour, on the table, in a gilt frame. What courageous and worthy life she might have spent there, near her André! How was it she had not understood that there was her duty, there the pride of her widowhood? By what blindness, what unworthy weakness?

Whilst she thus painfully reviews her life in the freshness of the evening and the calm of the solitary house, loud laughter, an outburst of happy youth, rises from the floor below; and, remembering André's confidence, his last letter in which he told her the great news, she tries to distinguish among all those clear, fresh voices that of her daughter Élise, the bride of her son, whom she does not know, whom she may never know. This thought, which completes the mother's disinheritance, adds to the agony of her last

moments, overwhelms them with such remorse and regrets, that, despite her intention of being brave, she weeps, she weeps.

Of a sudden, quick steps shake the staircase, the door opens hurriedly, it is André. He sings, he is contented and in a great haste, because he is expected to dine with the Joyeuses. Quick! a light! The lover must make himself handsome. But, whilst rubbing the matches, he fancies there is some one in the studio, a moving shadow among the motionless ones.

"Who is there?"

Something like stifled laughter, or a sob, replies. He thinks it is his little neighbours a trick of theirs to amuse him He approaches. Two hands, two arms, press him, embrace him.

"It is I."

And, in a feverish voice, that hurries on in order to reassure itself, she tells him she is going on a long journey, and that before parting——

"A journey. And where are you going?"

"Oh! I don't know. We are going a very long way, on business he is about."

"What! You won't be there to see my play? It's three days off. And besides, immediately afterwards, the marriage. Come now; he can't prevent you from coming to my marriage."

She excuses herself, invents reasons; but her hands that burn in those of her son, her changed voice, make André understand she is not speaking the truth. He wants to light up, she prevents him:

"No, no, it's no use. It's better like that. Besides, I have still so many preparations; I must be off."

They are both standing up, ready for the separation; but André will not let her go without making

her confess what is the matter with her, what tragic care is hollowing that beautiful face in which the eyes —is it an effect of the twilight?—shine with a wild light.

"Nothing—no, nothing. I assure you—only the idea of not being able to share in your happiness, your triumphs. In fact, you know I love you, you don't doubt your mother, do you? I have never been a day without thinking of you. Do the same for me. Keep your heart for me. And now kiss me and I must go—I am too late already."

Another minute, and she would not have had the strength to do what remained. She tries to rush out.

"No, but you shall not go. I feel that there is something strange happening you don't want to tell me. You have some great worry, I am sure. The fellow has done you some outrage"

"No, no. Let me go—let me go."

But he holds her back by force.

"Now, what is it? Speak—speak——"

Then, whispering tenderly in her ear, as gently as a kiss:

"He has left you, hasn't he?"

The poor woman starts, struggles.

"Don't ask me. I don't want to speak. Good bye!"

And he, pressing her to his heart:

"What could you tell me that I don't know already, poor mother? So you don't understand why I left six months ago?"

"You know?"

"Everything. And what has happened to-day I foresaw a long time. I desired it."

"Oh! Why did I come here?"

"Because it is your place, because you owe me ten mother's years. You see I must keep you."

He said it on his knees before the ottoman on which she had fallen in an overflow of tears, uttering the last painful cries of her wounded pride. She wept a long time, with her son at her feet. And behold! the Joyeuses, anxious at not seeing André come down, go and look for him in a body. It is an invasion of innocent faces, ingenuous merriment, floating curls, modest dresses, and the whole group is lit up by the big lamp, the good old lamp, with its huge shade, which M. Joyeuse is carrying solemnly, as high, as straight as he can. They stop speechless before this pale, sad lady, who looks in agitation at all this smiling beauty, Élise, especially, who is a little behind the others, and whose embarrassed attitude marks her out as the bride.

"Élise, kiss our mother and thank her. She is coming to live with her children."

She is embraced in all those caressing arms, against four little feminine hearts, who have long wanted a mother. She is introduced, and so gently, to the bright circle of the family lamp, which is enlarged a little for her to take her place, dry her eyes, warm and brighten her mind at that robust flame which rises without a flicker, even in that little artist's studio near the roof.

He who is in his last agonies, lying in his bloody bath, never knew that sacred flame. Selfish and hard, he lived to the end for show, swelling his shirt front as a surface sign of his vanity. Still, his vanity was the best thing about him. It kept him bold and erect so long a time, and it is now tightening his lips to stifle the gurgles of his agony. In the mouldy

garden, the jet of water trickles mournfully. The bugle sounds the close of day. "Go and see to number seven," says the mistress; "he will never finish his bath." The waiter goes up and utters a cry of terror, of amazement: "Oh! Madame, he is dead—but it is not the same man." They rush in, and, indeed, nobody is able to recognise the handsome man who just came in that weird doll, with his head hanging on the edge of the bath, a complexion in which paint is mingled with blood, the limbs lying in the last lassitude of the part he had played to the end, till it killed the actor.

Two razor strokes across the magnificent, unbending shirt front, and all his factitious majesty has become deflated, resolved into that nameless horror, that mass of mud, blood, painted and cadaverous flesh, in which the man of form, the Marquis Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon, lies unrecognisable.

CHAPTER XX

At Bordighera

Paul de Géry was returning from Tunis after three weeks of absence. Three interminable weeks spent in struggling amid intrigues, skilfully devised by the powerful hatred of the Hemerlingues. As soon as he arrived, he had learnt that the Chamber of Justice had secretly begun an action against Jansoulet, an absurd action, obviously lost in advance; and the Nabob's offices on the quay were closed, seals placed on his coffers, his ships were moored at La Goletta, a guard of chaouchs set round his palaces, announcing a kind of civil death, as if the only thing to be done was to divide the plunder. All that De Géry could hope for, was to save a few stray things, and to do that he had to hurry, for he expected, from one day to another, to hear of his friend's utter ruin.

He therefore set to work, and showed an untiring activity that nothing discouraged. The sang-froid of the deliberate little Southerner, who seemed to concentrate in himself all the exuberant qualities of his countrymen, was of at least as great use as his perfect knowledge of French Law, of which the Tunisian Code is only a mangled copy.

By dint of suppleness, of caution, and in spite of

all the plots of young Hemerlingue, who had great influence in the Bardo, he succeeded in saving from confiscation the money lent by the Nabob some months before, and in rescuing ten out of fifteen millions from the rapacious Mohammed. The very morning of the day on which this sum was to be counted out to him, he received a telegram from Paris telling of the annulling of the election. He at once ran to the Palace, hastening to arrive before the news; and on returning, with the drafts on Marseilles to the extent of ten millions safely shut up in his pocket-book, he met on his way young Hemerlingue's coach, tearing along as fast as three mules could drive him. His thin owl's face was radiant.

De Géry, understanding that if he remained a few hours longer in Tunis, his drafts would run great risk of being confiscated, went and paid for his passage on an Italian steamer which was going to Genoa next day, spent the night on board, and was only easy in mind when he saw the white houses of Tunis behind him. The steamer, on entering the harbour of Genoa, and moving alongside the quay, passed near a large yacht flying the Tunisian flag. De Géry was much perturbed. believed for a moment he was being pursued, and that, on landing, he would have unpleasant experiences with the Italian police, like any common swindler. But no; the yacht was quietly riding at anchor, the sailors were cleaning the deck, and repainting the red syren at the prow, as if some one of importance was expected. Paul did not feel any curiosity to know who the personage might be, merely crossed the marble city, and left by the train that goes from Genoa to Marseilles along the coast, that marvellous route in which one passes from the

black of the tunnels into the dazzling sight of the blue sea, but whose narrowness exposes it to many accidents.

And, it so happened, the train broke down at Savona, where the travellers were told they could not go any further probably for some ten or twelve hours.

It was morning, and De Géry, annoyed at the delay, was trying to find some way of killing time. He thought of poor Jansoulet, whose honour and life would perhaps be saved by the money he was bringing, of his dear Aline, of whom he had thought every day during his travels, and whose portrait had never left him. He then had the idea of hiring one of those four horsed calesini, that run between Genoa and Nice, all along the Italian Corniche, a lovely journey often made by foreigners, lovers, or lucky players at Monte Carlo. The driver guaranteed to be early in Nice.

Ah! on a beautiful June morning, at our friend Paul's age, with one's heart full of love as his was, to dash with four horses along the white road of the Corniche is an intoxication of a matchless journey.

But, as the day advanced, the sun, climbing up the heavens, began to scatter on the sea, now cleared of its mists, heavy, dazed, motionless with its quartz-like transparencies, millions of beams that fell in the water like arrows, a dazzling reflection, intensified by the white rocks and soil, and by a wind like a real African sirocco, that raised the dust in spirals as the carriage sped on. Paul was coming to the warmest, the most sheltered parts of the Corniche, a truly tropical temperature, where date trees, cactuses, aloes, grow in the open air. On seeing those exuberant trees, that fantastic vegetation, which cut into the

white, hot air, on feeling the blinding dust crack beneath the wheels like snow, De Géry, his eyes half-shut, under the illusion of the laden air, thought himself once more on the weary road between Tunis and the Bardo. But it was not the Bardo, but the pretty country about Bordighera, divided into two parts, like all the towns on that coast—the Marine, stretching along the shore, and the higher part of the town, united together by a forest of motionless palms, with spreading leaves and drooping tops, fretting the blue with their thousand uniform sprays.

The heat was unbearable, the horses were exhausted, and so the traveller was obliged to stop for a couple of hours in one of those large hotels that border the road. He crossed long, fresh and silent passages, to a large saloon looking north, which was apparently one of a set of rooms hired for the season, whose light door communicated with other rooms. There were white curtains, a carpet, that semi-comfort required by the English, even when travelling, and opposite there were windows which the hotel-keeper opened wide to entice the traveller, to persuade him to a longer stay. There was a splendid view of the mountains.

From the couch on which De Géry stretched himself, the admirable landscape, terraces of light, quivering olives, woods of darker oranges, with leaves moistened with flickering gleams, seemed to descend to his window in stages of divers greens, where scattered villas shone in their whiteness, among which that of Maurice Trott, the banker, was recognisable by the rich caprices of its architecture and the height of its palms. The Levantine's house, whose gardens reached to the very hotel windows, had been shelter-

ing for some months an artistic celebrity, the sculptor Bréhat, who was dying of consumption and owed a prolongation of life to this princely hospitality. The neighbourhood of the famous man, of whom the hotel-keeper was very proud, and whom he would have liked to put on his bill, the name of Bréhat, which De Géry had so often heard admiringly uttered in the studio of Felicia Ruys, reminded him of the lovely face with the pure lines he had last seen in the Bois de Boulogne, leaning on Mora's shoulder. What had become of the unhappy girl? And by a strange coincidence, as he was thus thinking of Felicia, a large white greyhound was gambolling, opposite to him, on the slopes of the neighbouring garden, in an alley of green trees. You would have at once said it was Kadour; the same short hair, the same pink, cruel and refined jaws. Paul, before his open window, was in a moment assailed by all kinds of sad and charming visions.

The noise of a door made him open his eyes. Some one had just entered the adjoining room. He heard the rustling of a dress against the thin partition, a leaf turned over in a book, which was evidently not interesting; for a long sigh, modulated like a yawn, made him start. Was he still sleeping, dreaming? Had he not just heard the cry of "the jackal in the desert," so well in harmony with the burning, heavy temperature outside? No. Nothing more. He fell asleep again; and this time, all the confused images that haunted him were fixed in a dream, a very beautiful dream.

He was on his honeymoon with Aline. A delicious bride. Clear eyes, full of love and faith, that were only conscious of him, were looking at him alone.

In this same hotel salon, on the other side of the gueridon, the pretty girl was sitting in a white morning gown, that smelt sweetly of violets, and the beautiful lace of the wedding present. They were lunching. One of those honeymoon lunches, served up opposite the blue sea, the limpid sky, that tinge with blue the glass from which they drink, the eyes one looks at, the future, life, space. Oh! how beautiful it was; what a divine, rejuvenating light; how loving they felt!

All at once, as they were kissing each other ecstatically, Aline became sad. Her lovely eyes were veiled in tears. She said to him: "Felicia is there; you won't love me any more." And he laughed: "Felicia here?—what an idea!" "Yes, yes—she is there." Trembling she pointed to the next room, whence came pell-mell furious barks and Felicia's voice: "Here, Kadour—here, Kadour," in the low, concentrated, enraged voice of some one in hiding, who sees herself suddenly discovered.

Awaking with a start, the disenchanted lover found himself in his solitary room, before an empty gueridon, his beautiful dream gone. But you could actually hear in the next room a dog's bark, and hurried knocks that shook the door.

"Open. It is I—Jenkins."

Paul started up on his couch, stupefied. Jenkins here? How was that? To whom was he talking? What voice would reply? There was no reply. A light step moved to the door, and the bolt creaked nervously.

"At last I have found you," said the Irishman, entering.

And truly, if he had not given his name, Paul

would not have recognised the gentle-mannered Jenkins in that brutal, violent, harsh voice.

"I have found you at last, after eight days' seeking and mad drives from Genoa to Nice, from Nice to Genoa. I knew you had not gone; the yacht was still in the harbour. And I was about to examine all the hotels on the coast, when I remembered Bréhat. I thought you would visit him as you passed. I have come from him. He told me you were here."

But to whom was he speaking? What a singular obstinacy was shown in not answering him? At last, a beautiful, sad voice, that Paul knew well, vibrated in its turn in the heavy resonant air of the hot afternoon.

"Well! Yes, Jenkins, here I am. What's the matter?"

Behind the wall, Paul could see her disdainful mouth, drooping with a fold of disgust.

"I have come to prevent you from going, from committing this madness"

"What madness? I have work at Tunis. I must go there."

"But you don't think, my dear child——"

"Oh! enough of your fatherliness, Jenkins—I know what is hid beneath it. Speak as you did just now. I prefer in you the bull-dog to the cringing cur. I am less afraid of it."

"Well, I tell you you must be mad to go there by yourself, young and beautiful as you are."

"And am I not always alone? Would you prefer me to take Constance, at her age?"

"And me?"

"You?" She modulated the word with a laugh full of irony. "And Paris? And your clients? Deprive Society of its Cagliostro? Never!"

"Still, I am resolved to follow you wherever you go," replied Jenkins determinedly.

There was an instant's silence. Paul asked himself if it was worthy of him to listen to this discussion, which he felt to be big with terrible revelations. But, besides his fatigue, an invincible curiosity nailed him to his seat. It seemed to him the fascinating riddle, by which he had been so long bewitched and troubled, which still held on to his mind by the edge of its mysterious veil, was at last going to speak, to reveal itself, to show the suffering or perverse woman concealed in the Society artist. So he remained motionless, holding his breath, having, moreover, no need to play the spy, for the other two, thinking themselves alone in the hotel, allowed their passions and voices to rise unrestrainedly.

"In fine, what do you want of me?"

"I want you."

"Jenkins!"

"Yes, yes, I know, you have forbidden me ever to say such words in your presence; but others than I have said them to you, and at closer quarters."

Two nervous steps brought her near the apostle, flung into his broad sensual face the panting contempt of her reply.

"And if that is so, you scoundrel! If I was not able to protect myself against disgust and ennui, if I ever lost my pride, is it for you of all people to speak about it? As if you were not the cause, as if you had not for ever tarnished, saddened my life."

And these burning, rapid words revealed to the terrified Paul de Géry the horrible scene of that crime, attempted under guise of affectionate guardianship, against which the young girl's mind, thoughts,

dream, had had to struggle so long, and which had left her the incurable sadness of premature anguish, the disillusion of a life hardly begun, that fold at the corner of her lips, as it were, the visible ruin of her smile.

"I loved you—I love you now—Passion carries one away," replied Jenkins in a dull voice.

"Well! love me, if it amuses you I hate you not only for the harm you have done me, all that you have killed in me of belief, of beautiful energy, but because you represent to me everything that is most execrable, most hideous under the sun, hypocrisy and lying. Yes, in that Society masquerade, in that heap of grimaces and lies, of cowardly, dirty conventions, which have sickened me so much that I am fleeing from them, that I am exiling myself in order not to see them any more, that I would prefer a prison, a sewer, the pavement as a prostitute, to them, your mask, O sublime Jenkins, is that which inspires me with the greatest horror. You have complicated our French hypocrisy of smiles and politeness with your hearty English hand-shakes, your cordial and demonstrative loyalty. All have been tricked by it. They say "the good Jenkins, the brave, the honest Jenkins." But I know you, my worthy fellow, and, in spite of your lovely motto so shamelessly stamped on your envelopes, your seal, your cuff-buttons, the lining of your hats, the panels of your carriage, I always see in you the rascal you are, who are seen through your disguise in every part."

Her voice hissed between her clenched teeth with an indescribable savagery of expression; and Paul expected some furious revolt of Jenkins against such outrageous words. But no, That hatred, that

contempt, coming from the woman he loved, must have caused him more pain than anger; for he answered in subdued tones, with an air of heart-broken gentleness:

"Oh! you are cruel. If you knew how you are hurting me. Hypocrite, yes, I am; but I was not born one. I became so perforce, through the hardships of life. When you have the wind against you, and you want to get on, you tack. I have tacked. Accuse my miserable beginnings, my wretched entry into life, and at least admit that one thing I have never lied about: my passion! Nothing could rebuff me, neither your disdain nor your insults, nor anything I read in your eyes which, for so many years, have not once smiled on me. It is my passion that now gives me the strength, even after what I have just heard, to tell you why I am here. Listen. You declared one day that you needed a husband, somebody to watch over you during your work, to relieve poor Crenmitz. Those are your own words, which rent my heart at the time, because I was not free. It is all changed now. Will you marry me, Felicia?"

"And your wife?" cried the young woman, whilst Paul asked himself the same question.

"My wife is dead."

"Dead? Madame Jenkins? Is it true?"

"You did not know the wife of whom I am speaking. The other was not my wife. When I met her, I was already married in Ireland—several years before—a horrible marriage, contracted with a rope round my neck. My dear, I found myself at twenty-five in this dilemma; imprisonment for debt, or Miss Strang, an old gouty woman, the sister of a usurer who had advanced me five hundred pounds to pay for my

medical studies I should have preferred prison; but weeks and months enfeebled my courage, and I married Miss Strang, whose dowry was my note-of-hand. You see what my life was between those two monsters who adored each other. A jealous, weak woman. The brother spying on me, following me everywhere. I could have run away. But one thing restrained me The moneylender was said to be hugely rich I wanted at least to profit by my cowardice. Ah! I tell you all, you see. Well, I was well punished. Old Strang died insolvent: he used to gamble, had ruined himself, without saying a word. Then I put my rheumatic wife in a lunatic asylum and came to France I had to begin life again, with hard struggles and poverty But I had in my favour experience, a hatred and contempt for men, and the regaining of freedom, for I did not suspect that the horrible bond of the cursed union could still hinder my movements. Happily, it's all over! I am free!"

"Yes, Jenkins, free! But why don't you think of making a wife of the poor creature who has shared your life so long, humble and devoted, as we have all seen her?"

"Oh," he replied with an outburst of sincerity, "between my two prisons I think I preferred the other, where I could be frankly indifferent or rancorous. But the atrocious comedy of conjugal love, of unwearied happiness, when I have for so long loved you only, thought only of you—there is no punishment like it on earth. To judge by myself, the poor woman must, when we parted, have uttered a cry of relief and joy. It's the only farewell I expected from her."

"But what forced you to such constraint?'

"Paris, Society, the world. Married before public opinion, we were bound by it."

"And now you are no longer?"

"Now there's a thing that dominates everything, the idea of losing you, no longer seeing you. Oh, when I heard of your flight, when I saw the inscription "TO LET" on your door, I felt I had done with poses and grimaces, that all I had to do was to depart, to run quickly after my happiness, which you were carrying away. You left Paris; I left it too. You sold up your home: I am going to sell up mine."

"And she?" went on Felicia, shuddering, "she, the irreproachable companion, the honest woman, whom nobody ever suspected, where will she go? what will she do? And you have come to ask me to fill her place! A stolen place, and in what a hell! Well, and that motto, good Jenkins, virtuous Jenkins,—what shall we do with it? 'Do good, without expectation of return,' old chap!"

To that scornful laugh, which must have branded his face crimson as with the cut of a whip, the wretch replied, breathing hard:

"Enough—enough—don't joke like that. It's too horrible. Does it not touch you to be loved as I love you, sacrificing fortune, honour, reputation? Come, look at me. However well-fitted on my mask may have been, I have torn it off for you; I have torn it off before everybody. And now! here is the hypocrite."

You heard the dull thud of two knees on the parquet. And stammering, bewildered with love, prostrate before her, he begged her consent to the marriage, to give him the right to follow, to defend her everywhere; then words failed him, were stifled by a passionate sob, so deep, so anguished, that it

would have touched any heart. But Felicia did not soften, and said haughtily:

"Let's end it, Jenkins. What you ask is impossible. We have nothing to hide from one another; and after your confidences, I may tell you one that hurts my pride, but of which your wild passion is worthy. I was Mora's mistress."

Paul was not ignorant of that. And yet that lovely, pure voice, conveying such an avowal, was so melancholy amid that air, intoxicating with its blue sky and its perfumes, that his heart-strings were tightened, and he had in his mouth the taste of tears which is left by an unavowed regret.

"I knew it," answered Jenkins, in a hollow voice. "I have the letters you wrote him."

"My letters?"

"Oh! I give them back to you; take them. I know them by heart, through reading and re-reading them. That hurts, when you love. But I have gone through other tortures. When I think that I——" He stopped. He was choking. "I who had to furnish the combustible for your flames—Ah! what a number of Pearls he swallowed. It was no use my saying no, he always wanted more. At last I was seized with rage. 'You want to burn, you wretch. Well, burn!'"

* * * * *

Paul rose up, frightened. Was he going to be the confidant of a crime?

But he was spared the shame of hearing more about it.

A loud knock, at his door this time, announced that the calesino was ready.

"Eh! Signor Francese."

In the neighbouring room there was silence, then a whispering. There was somebody quite near them who had heard them. Paul de Géry went down hurriedly He wished to be out of that room, to escape the obsession of so many revealed infamies.

As the post-chaise began to move, he beheld, between the white curtains that show at all the windows in the South, a pale face with the hair of a goddess, and large, burning eyes on the watch. But a look at Aline's portrait speedily banished the troubling vision, and, for ever cured of his old love, he travelled till night through a fairy landscape with the pretty bride of the lunch, who carried away in the folds of her modest dress, of her young woman's cloak, all the violets of Bordighera.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIRST NIGHT OF "RÉVOLTE."

"FIRST-ACT!" shouted the stage-manager, his hands shaped like a speaking-trumpet, standing at the bottom of the actors' staircase, and his call ascended and died away in the passages full of the noise of slamming doors, hasty steps, desperate cries for the coiffeur, the dressers, whilst there appear in succession on the landings of the various stories, slow and majestic, with heads motionless for fear of deranging the last detail of their costumes, all the characters of the first act of "Révolte," elegant, modern ball-dresses, with creakings of new shoes, the silky rustling of trains, the clinking of rich bracelets raised in order to button the gloves. They all seem agitated, nervous, pale under their paint, and in the cleverly prepared satined shoulders, sprinkled with flake-white, shivers pass. They speak little, their mouths are dry. The boldest, whilst pretending to smile, have in their eyes, their voices, the hesitation of an absent mind, the fear of the battle at the footlights, which is one of the strongest attractions of the actor's profession, its piquancy, its renewed charm.

Cardailhac, in black and white tie, his hat cocked over his ear, takes a last look at the scenery, hurries

up the workers, compliments the ingénue, is radiant and superb. To look at him you would never suspect his dreadful anxieties. Drawn into the Nabob's débâcle, in which his loan is swallowed up, he is putting his last coin on to-night's play. A fourth bankruptcy threatens him. But, bah! our manager has confidence. Success, like all monsters that eat man-kind, loves youth; and their unknown author, quite new on the posters, flatters the gambler's superstitions.

André Maranne is not so sure. As the performance approaches, he loses faith in his work, overwhelmed by the sight of the house, which he looks at through the peep-hole in the curtain, as he would through the narrow glass of a stereoscope.

A splendid house, filled to the ceiling, in spite of the late spring, and the Society taste for early flitting to the country; a house which Cardailhac, the declared foe of nature and the country, doing his best to keep Parisians in Paris as long as possible, has succeeded in filling, in making as brilliant as in the winter. Fifteen hundred heads are swarming under the chandelier. In the stalls are Society men, club men, with gleaming skulls, large partings among scanty hair, light gloves, big opera-glasses. In the galleries are mixtures of worlds and toilettes, all the names known at this kind of solemnity, and the embarrassing promiscuity that places the reserved, chaste smile of an honest woman side by side with eyes burning with kohl, with vermilion-painted mouths. White hats, red hats, diamonds and paint. Above these, the boxes show the same confusion; actresses and unfortunates, ministers, ambassadors, famous authors, critics, the latter with a grave air, knitted eyebrows, lying in their

stalls with the impassive haughtiness of incorruptible judges. The stage-boxes are conspicuous by their light and splendour, occupied by banking celebrities, décolletées women with bare arms, streaming with diamonds.

Maranne instinctively looked for friendly faces in this crowd, wearied with the ennui of waiting. He turned his eyes towards a front box filled by the Joyeuse family; Elsie and the little girls in front, behind them Aline and the father, an adorable family group, like a bouquet steeped in dew, amid a show of artificial flowers. And whilst all Paris was contemptuously asking: "Who are those people?" the poet left his fate in those little fairy hands, freshly-gloved for the occasion, which would presently boldly give the signal for applause.

"Clear the stage!" Maranne had only time to throw himself into the flies; and all at once he hears, far off, the first words of his play rising up, a flight of timid birds, in the silence and immensity of the theatre. A terrible moment. Where should he go? What would become of him? Remain glued against a post, with stretched ear, tightened heart; encourage the actors when he wants so much encouragement himself? He prefers to face the peril; and he slips out by the little door communicating with the passage behind the boxes to a box which is softly opened. "Hush! It's I." Somebody is sitting in the shadow, a woman whom all Paris knows, and who is hiding. André sits near her, and, pressing close to one another, unseen by any, mother and son tremblingly assist at the performance.

There was at first amazement in the audience. This Théâtre des Nouveautés, situated in the very

heart of the Boulevard, where its portico is displayed all alight, among the great restaurants, the chic clubs; this theatre, to which people came after a good dinner, to listen, till supper-time, to an act or two of something "thick," had become in the hands of its clever manager the most fashionable of all Parisian entertainments. After the first minute's astonishment, some disappointed exclamations here and there in the boxes: "Dear me! it's in verse!"—the house began to feel the charm of that strong, healthy play, as if there had been sprinkled over it, in its close atmosphere, some essence fresh and piquant to breathe, an elixir of life perfumed with mountain thyme.

"Ah! that's good—it's restful!"

That was the general cry, a pleasing shiver, a swooning of well-being accompanying each verse. He felt soothed, the fat Hemerlingue, gasping in his stage-box; so did tall Suzanne Bloch, with her hair dressed à l'antique, with curls passing beneath a golden diadem; and near her, Amy Férat, all in white, like a bride, with orange-blossoms in her hair. In fact everybody felt the same about the play. Handsome Moëssard said so under his small, blonde moustache, whilst his queen in her front box opposite translated it into her barbarous foreign tongue. All these murmurs of good wishes, united and blended together, began to give the house the look it has on great nights. Success was in the air, faces were becoming calm, the women seemed embellished by their reflections of enthusiasm, their glances exciting as applause. Suddenly the whispers redoubled, changed into a tumult. People were jeering, stirring in their seats. What was happening? An accident on the stage? André, bending, frightened, towards the actors who were as

astonished as himself, saw all the glasses turned in the direction of one large box, which had been empty till then. Some one had just entered it and sat down in gloomy solitude, his elbows on the velvet front of the box, after having taken his opera-glass out of its case.

In ten days the Nabob had grown twenty years older. Ever since the invalidation, the poor man had shut himself in his room, with blinds drawn, not wishing even to see daylight, nor to pass the threshold, beyond which life was awaiting him with its engagements, promises, heaps of protested bills and summonses. The Levantine had gone to a watering-place with her shampooer and negresses, quite indifferent to the ruin of the family; Bompain, the befezzed, was frightened by the demands for money, not knowing how to approach his unfortunate master, who was always in bed, turning his face to the wall as soon as business was mentioned; the old mother alone had remained, who could make head against the disaster, with her limited, honest knowledge as a village widow, who knows what a stamped paper, a signature mean, and regards honour as the finest thing in the world. She never consulted her son, except when it was indispensable, in brief, discreet words, avoiding even looking at him.

A telegram from De Géry, dated Marseilles, and announcing that he was coming with ten millions, at last drew Jansoulet from his torpor. Ten millions, that is to say, bankruptcy avoided, the possibility of recovering himself, of recommencing life. And behold! our Southerner bounded up from the bottom of his fall, intoxicated with joy and full of hope. He had the windows opened, the newspapers brought.

What a magnificent opportunity was this first night of "Révolte," to appear to the Parisians, who thought he had foundered, to re-enter the great whirlwind by the double-door of his box at the Nouveauté's! His mother, warned by an instinct, rather tried to keep him from it. Paris now frightened her. But she could not resist the wilful man, who had been spoilt by wealth. She helped him to dress, "made him handsome," as she said, laughing, and saw him go off not without a certain pride, splendid as he looked, revived, almost recovered from the terrible dejection of the latter days.

On reaching the theatre, Jansoulet soon observed the noise his presence created in the house. Accustomed to these curious ovations, he usually answered them without the least confusion, with his broad, kindly smile; but this time the manifestation was hostile, almost indignant.

"What! Is that he?"

"There he is."

"What impudence!"

These cries came from the stalls, with many others. Having lived in retirement and complete solitude for some days, he was ignorant of the public exasperation in regard to him, the homilies, the dithyrambs in the papers about his corrupting wealth, sensational articles in hypocritical phraseology. The fearful outcry caused him at first more pain than anger. Greatly moved, he concealed his feeling behind his glass, following the least details of the play, sitting in a three-quarters attitude, but unable to escape the scandalous observation of which he was the prey and which made his ears buzz, his temples beat, the damp lenses of his glass fill with many-coloured circles, in which is seen the first sign of blood congestions.

When the curtain dropped at the end of the act, he remained in his posture of embarrassed motionlessness; but the more distinct whisperings, which were no longer restrained by the dialogue on the stage, the inquisitiveness of people who changed their seats in order to get a better look at him, forced him to leave his box, to rush into the corridors, like a wild-beast escaping from the arena across the circ Under the low ceiling, in the narrow circular passage of the theatre corridors, he fell among a compact crowd of dandies, journalists, women in hats, laughing professionally, stupidly, leaning with their backs to the wall From the open boxes, trying to breathe among this noisy swarm, came fragments of talk, mixed up together, disconnected:

"Delightful play—fresh—straightforward."

"That Nabob! What effrontery!"

"Yes, indeed! it's restful. It makes you feel better!"

"How is it he has not yet been arrested?"

"Quite a young man, it seems. It's his first play."

"Bois-Landry at Mazas! Impossible! There's the Marquise opposite us, in the first gallery, with a new hat."

"What does it prove? She has her profession as lanceuse. It's very pretty, that hat—the colours of Desgranges' horse."

"And Jenkins? What's come of Jenkins?"

"At Tunis with Felicia. The old Brahim saw them both. It seems the Bey decidedly likes the Pearls."

"The deuce he does!"

Further on, some soft voices were murmuring:

"Go, father, go. See how lonely he is, the poor man."

"But, my children, I don't know him."

"Well! only a bow. Something to show him he is not utterly deserted."

Immediately, a little old gentleman, very red, with a white cravat, rushed up to the Nabob, and raised his hat very respectfully. With what gratitude, what a friendly and eager smile, this solitary greeting was returned, the greeting of a man Jansoulet did not know, whom he had never seen, and who nevertheless had a great influence on his fate; for had it not been for father Joyeuse, the Chairman of the Territoriale would probably have suffered in the same way as the Marquis de Bois-Landry.

Glances vaguely directed to the air, aimless changes of walk, hats suddenly thrust down to the eyes, in ten minutes the Nabob endured all the manifestations of that terrible ostracism of Parisian Society, in which he had neither relations nor serious ties, and whose scorn isolated him more surely than respect isolates a sovereign when visiting. He staggered with embarrassment, with shame. Some one said very loud: "He has had too much to drink," and all the poor man could do was to go back and shut himself in his box. Usually it was filled between the acts with Stock Exchange men and journalists. They laughed, they smoked, making a great noise; the manager would come to greet his patron. This evening, nobody. And the absence of Cardailhac, with his keen scent for success, gave Jansoulet the measure of his disgrace.

"What have I done to them? Why does not Paris want to have any more of me?"

It was six months—only six months that he had been in Paris! Everything devoured in six months!

He was sunk in a kind of torpor, from which he was aroused by enthusiastic applause and bravos. "Révolte" was decidedly a great success. They now came to strong, satirical passages; and the violent tirades, rather too emphatic, but soaring on some breath of youth and sincerity, made all hearts vibrate, after the idyllic effusions of the beginning. Jansoulet in his turn wanted to hear, to see. The theatre belonged to him, after all. His seat in that box cost him more than a million; he had at least the right to occupy it.

So he seated himself again in front of his box. In the house, a heavy, suffocating heat, stirred up and not dispersed by the fans that sparkled in the impalpable breath of silence. They were piously listening to an indignant, haughty speech against plunderers, so numerous at that period, who were in high society after having frequented the darkest corners in order to rob passers-by. Assuredly, Maranne, when writing those fine verses, had thought of anybody but the Nabob. But the audience saw an allusion in it; and whilst a triple salvo of applause greeted the end of the tirade, every head was turned towards the Nabob's stage-box with an indignant movement, openly insulting. The unfortunate man, to be pilloried in his own theatre! A pillory that had cost him so much! This time he did not try to withdraw from the affront; he planted himself resolutely, with crossed arms, braving the crowd that was gazing at him, those hundreds of raised, mocking faces, that virtuous "All Paris" who took him for their scape-goat, and banished him, after having loaded him with all their crimes.

Truly a pretty society for such a manifestation! Opposite, a box of bankrupt bankers, the wife and

her lover next each other in front, the husband in the shadow, grave and effaced. By their side, the frequent trio of a mother who has married her daughter after her own heart, in order to make a son-in-law of the man she loved. Next were interloping households, women displaying the price of their shame, diamonds in fiery circles riveted round their arms and necks like dogs' collars, cramming themselves with bonbons which they devoured brutally, bestially, because they know that the animality of a woman pleases those who pay for it. And those groups of effeminate dandies, with bare necks, painted eyebrows, whose embroidered cambric shirts and white satin corsets were admired at Compiègne amongst the other guests; those minions of Agrippa's time, calling each other: "My heart—my dear beauty." All the scandals, all the disgraces, consciences sold or to be sold, the vice of an epoch without grandeur, without originality, all were there. And these were the people who rejected him, who cried: "Away with you. You are unworthy of us."

"Unworthy! I! But I am a hundred thousand times better than you, you miserable rabble! You reproach me with my millions. And who helped me to consume them? You, you cowardly and treacherous comrade, who are hiding your big paunch in a corner of your stage-box. I made your fortune with mine at the time when we shared like brothers. You, livid marquis, I paid one hundred thousand francs at the club that you might not be shamefully expelled. As for you, woman, I covered you with jewels, leading people to believe you were my mistress, because that looks well in our Society, and I asked you nothing in

return. And you, shameless journalist, who have all the dirt of your ink for brains, and as much leprosy on your conscience as your queen has on her skin, you think I have not paid you your price, and that is why you insult me. Yes, yes, look at me, you low scum. I am proud. I am better than you."

All that he thus said mentally, in a delirium of rage, perceptible in the trembling of his thick, livid lips, the unhappy man, in whom madness was stirring, was perhaps going to shout out loud in the silence, to launch an invective against that insolent herd, who knows?—to leap in the midst of them, to kill one, by God! to kill one, when he felt himself lightly touched on the shoulder; and a fair head appeared before him, serious and sincere, with both hands outstretched, which he seized convulsively, like a drowning man.

"Oh! dear—dear," stammered the poor man. But he had no strength to say more. That gentle emotion, coming in the midst of his fury, melted him into a sob of tears, of blood, of strangled words. His face became violet. He made a sign: "Take me away." And staggering, leaning on De Géry's arm, he had just passed the door of his box, when he fell down in the corridor.

"Bravo! bravo!!" cried the audience at the actor's tirade; and there was a noise as of hail, of enthusiastic stamping, whilst the big, lifeless body, raised with difficulty by the scene-shifters, crossed the brilliant coulisses, which were full of inquisitive people who looked around the stage, excited by the huge success, who hardly noticed the passing of the inanimate conquered man, carried in the arms, like a victim of a riot. He was stretched on a couch in the

lumber-room, Paul de Géry at his side with a doctor, and two men who were busy giving aid. Cardailhac, very taken-up with his play, had promised to come for news "immediately after the *fifth* act."

Bleedings, cupping-glasses, mustard-poultices, nothing brought even a quiver to the skin of the sick man, who was insensible to all the methods used in cases of apoplexy. An abandonment of his whole being seemed to consign him already to death, to prepare him for the stiffness of the corpse; and that in the most gloomy place in the world, a chaos illuminated by a dull lantern, where he pell-mell in the dust all the refuse of old plays, gilt furniture, hangings with shining fringes, strong-boxes, card-tables, dismembered staircases and balusters, among ropes, pulleys, a heap of worthless stage properties, broken, demolished, distorted.

Bernard Jansoulet, lying amid such wrecks, his linen cut open on his chest, bleeding and livid at the same time, was indeed a man shipwrecked in life, bruised and cast on shore with the sad débris of his artificial wealth, that had been scattered and pulverised by the Parisian whirlwind. Paul, with bursting heart, looked on sadly at it all, at that short-nosed face, that preserved, motionless as it was, the angry and kindly expression of an inoffensive being, who has tried to defend himself before dying, and has not had the time to bite. He reproached himself for his powerlessness to serve him effectually. What was his fine plan of leading Jansoulet through the bogs, of guarding him against ambushes? All he had been able to do was to save a few millions for him, and even they had arrived too late.

The windows on the ground balcony of the Boulevard had just been opened, which was full of noisy, luminous bustle. The theatre was surrounded by a cordon of gas, a zone of fire, that made the shadows seem more sombre, lit up now and then by the moving lamps of carriages, like stars travelling in a dark sky. The play was over. People were going out. The black, serried crowd at the exits scattered along the white pavements, were about to spread throughout the town the rumour of a great success, and the name of an unknown playwright, who next day would be triumphant and famous. A wonderful evening, illuminating the windows of the restaurants, whilst rows of belated equipages rumbled through the streets.

The festal tumult, which the poor Nabob had loved so much, which harmonised so well with the bewildering glitter of his life, revived him a second. His lips moved, and his dilated eyes, turning towards De Géry, assumed once more before death an anguished, imploring, protesting look, as if to take him as witness of one of the greatest, cruellest injustices Paris had ever perpetrated.

THE END.

PRINTED BY NEILL AND CO., LTD., EDINBURGH.

THE LOTUS LIBRARY.

A series of tastefully produced volumes of popular British and Continental Novels, pocket size (fcap. 8vo), all beautifully printed and artistically bound in either cloth or leather, with silk book-mark, each containing an Illustration or Portrait as frontispiece.

Translated by G. F. MONKSHOOD.

No. 1.—**SAPHO.** By ALPHONSE DAUDET

Cloth, 1/6 *net.* Leather, 2/6 *net.*

Translated by ERNEST TRISTAN.

No. 2.—**THAÏS.** By ANATOLE FRANCE.

Cloth, 1/6 *net.* Leather, 2/6 *net*

Translated by HENRY BLANCHAMP.

No. 3.—**THE NABOB.** By DAUDET.

Cloth, 2/- *net.* Leather, 3/- *net.*

IN ACTIVE PREPARATION.

MADAME BOVARY. By FLAUBERT.

SALAMMBO. By FLAUBERT.

CANDIDE. By VOLTAIRE.

A WOMAN'S SOUL. By MAUPASSANT.

AND OTHER POPULAR STORIES.

Complete Catalogue of Popular Fiction post free on application.

A NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE HYPOCRITE."

BACK TO LILAC LAND

By C. RANGER-GULL,

Author of "The Serf," "Miss Malevolent," "The Hypocrite," "The Cigarette Smoker," etc.

Cr. 8vo, cloth, **SIX SHILLINGS.**

A FEW OF MANY PRESS OPINIONS.

Morning Post.—"A good novel of stage life is a rare bird in this country, and the author of 'Back to Lilac Land,' who has given us this good thing, deserves a full measure of praise"

Great Thoughts.—"Excellent both as a story, as a study of character, and as an exposure of the evils of theatrical life A more scathing indictment of the stage was never drawn, and the worst of it is, it is evidently drawn by some one with a wide and intimate acquaintance with the facts, and with no wish to set down aught in malice. The book is smartly, often eloquently, written, it abounds in wit and humour to relieve the tragedy, and most of the characters are finely drawn The second chapter of the last book is surpassingly beautiful"

The Pall Mall Gazette.—"A very intelligent and well-written story. A decidedly entertaining novel -fresh and well constructed, and evidently written by one who understands the inwardness of the profession"

Glasgow Herald.—"This is a book to be read . The story is distinctly clever and fascinating"

Ladies' Field.—"A powerfully written dramatic story. One of the most ferocious attacks upon the stage we remember reading"

The Literary World says.—"The anonymous author has written a story which all who have seriously considered the subject must applaud as a faithful, reasonable, and powerful account of the touring actor's life . . . 'Back to Lilac Land' will be classed with George Moore's 'A Mummer's Wife,' and with Leonard Merrick's 'The Actor-Manager,' as one of the three best novels of theatrical life which the last fifteen years have yielded"

Liverpool Mercury.—"A very powerful story of theatrical life, in which the stage and its profession are painted in colours almost lurid in their intensity. The story of the clever but weak Charles Ardenne and his stage-struck wife is not altogether pleasant reading, but it is vividly interesting and most impressive The realism of the book, even if its accuracy and fairness be questioned, cannot but strike the reader as something quite uncommon, and holds attention to the last page. 'Lilac Land' stands for love and happiness."

LONDON:

GREENING & CO., LTD., 20 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road.

THE SERF.

A Historical Novel by C. RANGER-GULL,

Author of "The Hypocrite," "Back to Lilac Land," etc

THIRD EDITION.

PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.—It is a notable fact that in European literature the first-class historical novel is extremely rare. Books which seek to tell the story of times other than our own are constantly being published, but, though the reader may find among them many pleasant tales, many novels which he will have no hesitation in calling "good," the first-class novel of past ages is hardly ever met with. To produce a historic novel the writer must be equipped with several distinctive qualities not one of which is superfluous. He must not only be able to tell a vivid and interesting story, to paint with a fine colour sense a life less drab than ours is to day, but he must have the peculiar faculty of understanding how people thought in the days of which he writes.

Yet no knowledge, however accurate and profound, will, by its own merit, interest the general reader. A historical novel must be instinct with a warm sympathy for human nature, and must also avoid that stilted and wooden presentment of character which many writers make their puppets assume with their old-time costume. When reading most present-day historical novels one feels one is not living in the period of which they treat, but merely assisting at a Wardour Street carnival, a twentieth century bal-masque.

The action of the story takes place in the early mediæval ages, the actual date being about 1130, that period of anarchy and wickedness which has had no parallel in English history.

In Mr Ranger-Gull's story the facts of that lawless and evil time—a time in which the monkish historian wrote, "*Christ and all His angels seemed asleep*"—have been faithfully recorded.

The method of the popular historian, too mealy-mouthed or too ignorant to speak the truth, has not been used here. After long research and a thorough study of contemporary documents, the author has painted a complete picture, lacking no essential detail, of these times of blood and steel.

Yet "The Serf" is a story which cannot be called a gloomy one, though a tragedy of free will warring against fate is its principal *motif*.

The character of Hyla the Serf may be said to be a study in natural nobility of mind. In the adventures of this man, his daring, his cunning, his great dash for liberty, the reader will trace the growth of that great political idea which has gained Englishmen their freedom.

From the first page to the last the action of the story rushes on with an impetuosity and force which will carry the reader with it to the last words. How the poor serfs rose in their misery and avenged themselves upon their tyrant, how they fled through the great Hilgay fen, and how the final tragedy was enacted on the top of the Outfangthef tower at sunset, will interest every reader, old and young alike.

And though, first and foremost, "The Serf" is a story of "excitement," of vivid incident and the clash of arms, yet the publishers doubt if a more accurate picture of life in the early middle ages has been published for very many years.

PRICE SIX SHILLINGS.

A BRILLIANT NOVEL.

The Comedy of Progress

By REGINALD TURNER,

Author of "Cynthia's Damages," "The Steeple," etc.

SOME PRESS OPINIONS.

Bookman.—"A political novel of decided interest, picturing modern society, political method and influences, a really great lady, and a young man who thinks. Mr Turner's style is bright, shrewd, and trenchant."

Pall Mall Gazette. "A cleverly written story of more than usual interest. Mr Turner has here something to say, and says it well. From the first page onward we follow the career of Maurice Yorke with close interest, an interest which never flags, and the final chapter is in every way equal to the book's earlier promise. There is nothing slipshod, no falling off. The author has given us sterling good work throughout. The characterisation of Lady Sothern is excellent—so human withal. 'The Comedy of Progress' is a brilliant novel, its title, by the way, fitting it 'like a glove.'"

Morning Post.—"Readers will be delighted with 'The Comedy of Progress' by Reginald Turner. The story is told with skill and true artistic effect. Lady Sothern is an excellently drawn character, full of life and force. The charm and influence which she exercises over all who know her are quite convincingly expressed, and the scene with her husband when she confesses herself an old woman and stamps on her jewels is very ably done. Mr Turner may be sincerely congratulated on accomplishing a difficult task with more restraint and ability than one generally expects in such efforts."

Daily Telegraph. "Mr Turner has a pretty knack of touching off a character, or expressing a quaint thought, in a couple of lines, and there is no blinking the fact that some of his portraits are diverting likenesses of people he had met in the flesh."

St James's Gazette.—"The book is decidedly clever. Maurice Yorke himself, Lord and Lady Sothern, and Jonas Allen, are distinct and well-drawn characters, conceived and maintained with considerable skill. The story is something more than a political novel. It is concerned with the philosophy of life and its aims. There is much serious thought and practical wisdom in its pages, set forth in dialogue which is always amusing and sometimes brilliant."

The County Gentleman.—"Mr Turner is evidently an exceedingly close observer of men and matters, and, in addition, he has a considerable power of analysis of emotions and impulses of the springs which move to action and the restraining forces which control men's natural desires and ambitions. . . 'The Comedy of Progress' is throughout wittily and well-written, and ought to interest those who like a serious subject carefully treated, and with more than an occasional passage of pure fun and humour."

The Comedy of Progress

SECOND EDITION.

Crown 8vo, Cloth Gilt, SIX SHILLINGS.

"A NOVELTY IN NOVELS."—*St James's Gazette.*

Our Lady of the Ice

A Story of the Alps.

By CONSTANCE SUTCLIFFE.

Crown 8vo, Cloth, SIX SHILLINGS.

A FEW OF MANY PRESS OPINIONS.

Bookman. "An Alpine story of weird strength and impressiveness. The book is strong and tragic."

Universe.—"It is quite a relief to turn over the pages of a modern novel and find something really worth reading. . . . In the present book will be found quite a new departure. . . . The author has something to say and says it well. . . . The whole story is filled with pictures of the ice-clad Alps, and magnificently impressive are some of the descriptions of these peaks. . . . The book is well worth reading, and the author is to be thanked for giving so fine a picture of a region which has very seldom been touched upon in fiction."

The World.—"There are great qualities in this book, and two original characters, Max Imseng, the Swiss guide, and Katrine, his wife—'Italian born on the father's side.' The latter is the more striking of the two, and is, indeed, a study of human nature under strange conditions which ought to make its mark. . . . The woman's fatal misinterpretation of Jack Bronscombe, a fine specimen of the active and restless young Englishman, capable, as we see but poor Katrine does not, of noble self-forgetfulness, and towards her of unlucky reticence, is used with success. . . . Katrine's strong, tenacious, silently enduring, intensely loving nature, always under the oppression of the one dread which makes the gallant, generous young patron who is her husband's idol an object of superstitious aversion to her, is brought out with strength and tenderness rarely found. The construction of the story is deserving of warm praise, and its grave, unaffected style, which rises to the true note of passionate emotion when that is needed, harmonises with the scene, the incidents, and the actors."

Daily Telegraph.—"In choosing the 'Land of the Everlasting Snows" for the setting, and the glaciers of the higher Alps for the *mise-en-scène*, of her story, Miss Constance Sutcliffe touches ground as little trodden in fiction as in fact. Her choice is not surprising, for, apart from the interest evoked by a fresh subject, a very brief perusal of 'Our Lady of the Ice' must convince the reader that Miss Sutcliffe has an intimate knowledge of mountain climbing and that she has the insight to observe and the ability to portray some of the characteristic traits in the French-Swiss of these regions. The story itself is slight but attractive. . . . In the development of her story the authoress finds an opportunity for the portrayal of the temperament of these courageous, silent mountaineers, and the sturdy, simple daughters of the hills who mate with them. . . . She tells us of the ice spirits they fear, and she has the most interesting things to say of the glacier itself, of its waters, of the glacier flies, and of many of the mysteries in the world of ice-falls, gleaming peaks and inaccessible snows, to which her story introduces us so pleasantly."

LONDON:

GREENING & CO., LTD., 20 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road.

EVERY ONE

should read the most interesting story of Eastern life ever published.

Romance of a Harem

Translated from the French by

CLARENCE FORESTIER-WALKER.

Romance of a Harem

is a true and faithful story of life as it really is in Turkish and Egyptian Harems.

Romance of a Harem

is written by a French lady who lived for many years in the Imperial Harem at Constantinople.

Romance of a Harem

records all the exciting events which led to the sensational assassination of the Sultan Abdul Aziz.

Romance of a Harem

may be obtained at all booksellers and libraries. Very handsomely and artistically bound in crimson art vellum, lettered in white.

Price Three Shillings and Sixpence.

LONDON:

GREENING & CO., LTD., 20 Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road.